

Chill Out

Use these tips for freezing, thawing, and refrigerating foods.

Freeze foods safely. Freeze foods for later in the month. Pull them out when you don't have time to cook.

1. Cool all foods safely in the fridge first. This speeds up freezing and helps retain the natural color, flavor, and texture of food.
2. Freeze food in portions you will use at one time.
3. Seal the food to keep moisture out. Use plastic wrap, freezer bags, or plastic containers.
4. Label your package. Write the type of food and date it was made.
5. Keep freezer at 0°F or lower so food stays safe.

Thaw foods safely. Never thaw foods on the counter at room temperature.

- **Refrigerator.** Place food on the lowest shelf until it is no longer frozen. It will then keep for 2 to 5 days.
- **Cold water.** Submerge the food, packed in an airtight container or a leak-proof bag, in cold water. Change the water every 30 minutes to keep thawing. Cook foods defrosted in cold water right after thawing.
- **Microwave.** Cook microwave-defrosted foods right after thawing. Some parts of the food may have started to cook while defrosting.

Store foods safely. Keep food from spoiling or becoming unsafe to eat. Use within the time listed or freeze right away. The timelines below are for best quality.



Product	Refrigerator (40°F)	Freezer (0°F)
Fresh eggs, in shell	3 to 5 weeks	Do not freeze
Hot dogs and luncheon meats, unopened	2 weeks	1 to 2 months
Hot dogs and luncheon meats, opened	3 to 7 days	1 to 2 months
Ground meat and stew meat	1 to 2 days	3 to 4 months
Beef, lamb, veal, and pork chops	3 to 5 days	4 to 6 months
Cooked meat and poultry and casseroles	3 to 4 days	2 to 4 months
Cooked meat and poultry pieces in sauce	1 to 2 days	2 to 4 months
Whole poultry or poultry pieces	1 to 2 days	9 to 12 months
Pizza, leftover	3 to 4 days	1 to 2 months
Cheese, hard or grated	6 to 12 weeks	6 to 12 months
Milk	1 week	3 months
Yogurt	1 to 2 weeks	1 to 2 months