

Tool Box Talk



FOOD SAFETY ON SITE

August 2018

Storing Leftover Food

Storing leftovers safely begins as soon as you are done cooking your meal. Once you have completed your cooking, serving, and eating, you should immediately begin cooling your food before putting it in the refrigerator.

The goal is to minimize the time it takes for food to reach 4°C. Between 4°C and 60°C is considered the “danger zone” because food-borne, illness-causing bacteria will flourish in this range of temperatures. In food stored below 4°C, bacteria that could make you sick is less likely to grow. Health Canada recommends storing leftover food as soon as possible, and no later than two hours after cooking has finished.

Wrap food tightly or store it in air-tight containers, regardless of whether it will be stored in the freezer or the refrigerator.

Ice packs and an insulated cooler can keep your food cold if you do not have access to a refrigerator on site. Ice packs will stay frozen from 24 to 36 hours in an insulated container, or from 3 to 4 hours if the container is not insulated. Ice packs will maintain cold and stay frozen longer than just using ice.

Reheating Leftovers

When you have stored your food properly, you will have leftover food to munch on for days. If using a refrigerator, make sure that the temperature of the refrigerator is set to below 4°C. Otherwise, the food within it may not be safe.

Regardless what method you use to thaw your leftovers, use a thermometer to ensure that your food reaches an internal temperature of at least 74°C (165°F) when it is done.

It is important to reheat your leftovers in a microwave safe dish. Sometimes this will mean taking the extra step of transferring the food onto a plate or into a bowl.



Eating on Site

Eating with hands contaminated by bacteria or chemicals is one of the biggest causes of spreading illness. If you have access to soap and running water, wash your hands before eating or handling food. If you don't, then make sure you can clean your hands with a hand sanitizer to kill any bacteria or germs before eating.

Recommended Storage Times

Food		Refrigerator (4 C/40 F)	Freezer (-18 C/0 F)
Meat, poultry and eggs			
Fresh beef, veal, lamb, and pork	steaks	3-4 days	6-12 months
	chops	3-4 days	4-6 months
	roasts	3-5 days	4-12 months
Variety meats: tongue, liver, heart, and kidneys			
Ham	cooked whole ham	7 days	1-2 months
	cooked half ham	6-7 days	1-2 months
	cooked slices	3-4 days	1-2 months
Hamburger and stew meat		1-2 days	2-4 months
Ground turkey, veal, pork, and lamb		1-2 days	3-4 months
Chicken and turkey	whole	1-2 days	1 year
	pieces	1-2 days	6-9 months
Giblets (heart, liver, kidney and gizzard)		1-2 days	3-4 months
Hot dogs (Use by 'Best Before' date)	opened package	1 week	2 weeks
	unopened package	2-3 months	2-3 months
Luncheon meat (Use by 'Best Before' date)	opened package	3-5 days	1-2 months
	unopened package	2 weeks	1-2 months
Bacon and sausages (Use by 'Best Before' date)	bacon	7 days	1 month
	raw sausage (chicken, turkey, pork and beef)	1-2 days	2-3 months
Eggs	fresh raw	Use by 'Best Before' date	4 months (blended eggs)
	fresh yolk and white	2-4 days	4 months
	hard cooked eggs	1 week	Not recommended
Fish			
Cooked fish		1-2 days	4-6 months
Fatty fish: mullet, ocean and sea perch, char, sea trout, striped bass, salmon, mackerel, bluefish and tuna		2-3 days	2-3 months
Pollock, ocean perch and sea trout		2-3 days	4 months
Fresh lean fish: cod, flounder, haddock, halibut and perch		2-3 days	3-6 months
Smoked fish	Herring	3-4 days	2 months
	Cold-smoked salmon and white fish	5-8 days	2 months
	Hot-smoked salmon and white fish	14 days	6 months
	Other smoked fish	1-2 weeks	4-5 weeks
Opened canned fish		1 day	Not recommended
Leftovers and Prepared Foods			
Leftover cooked meat and poultry	meat and casseroles	3-4 days	2-3 months
	gravy and meat broth	3-4 days	2-3 months
	fried chicken	3-4 days	4 months
	poultry casseroles	3-4 days	4-6 months
	plain poultry pieces	3-4 days	4 months
	pieces covered with broth or gravy	3-4 days	6 months
Prepared salads	macaroni salad and tuna salad	3-5 days	Not recommended (does not freeze well)
Cooked stuffing		3-4 days	1 month
Soups and stews (with meat or vegetables)		3-4 days	2-3 months