



Leftover And Raw Foods Safety

By Monique Wilber

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Have you ever opened up a container of leftovers and wondered...is it still safe to eat? Have you looked at the “Best-by” date and wondered what that meant?

Refrigerated leftovers should be kept below 40 degrees and have short shelf lives to stay safe. Here are some foods that are common during holiday time and their refrigerated shelf lives. Can't eat it all up before its safety date is reached? Simply wrap it well and put it in the freezer.

Cooked and Prepared Foods:

- Cooked meat and meat dishes – 3 to 4 days refrigerated; 2 to 3 months freezer
- Gravy and meat broth – 1 to 2 days refrigerated; 2 to 3 months freezer
- Cooked fish - 3 to 4 days refrigerated; 4 to 6 months freezer
- Vegetable or meat soups and stews - 3 to 4 days refrigerated; 2 to 3 months freezer
- Mayonnaise-based salads - 3 to 5 days refrigerated; doesn't freeze well
- Ham, fully cooked, whole - 7 days refrigerated; 1 to 2 months freezer
- Ham, fully cooked, half - 3 to 5 days refrigerated; 1 to 2 months freezer
- Ham, fully cooked, slices - 3 to 4 days refrigerated; 1 to 2 months freezer
- Frozen casseroles – keep frozen until ready to heat; 3 to 4 months freezer

Raw Meats:

- Chicken or turkey, whole - 1 to 2 days refrigerated; 1 year freezer
- Chicken or turkey, parts - 1 to 2 days refrigerated; 9 months freezer
- Lean fish - 1 to 2 days refrigerated; 6 months freezer
- Fatty fish - 1 to 2 days refrigerated; 2 to 3 months freezer
- Fresh shrimp, scallops, crawfish - 1 to 2 days refrigerated; 3 to 6 months freezer
- Roasts - 3 to 5 days refrigerated; 4 to 12 months freezer
- Steaks - 3 to 5 days refrigerated; 6 to 12 months freezer
- Chops - 3 to 5 days refrigerated; 4 to 6 months freezer
- Pre-stuffed meats – 1 day refrigerated; doesn't freeze well
- Corned beef in pouch - 5 to 7 days refrigerated; drained, 1 month freezer

Many foods have a date stamped on the label. There are different dates on different types of foods. Here's what they mean:

- The "Pull-By" or "Sell-By" date is used on foods like milk, cheese, and packaged meats. It is the last date the product should be sold. These foods are usually stored in the refrigerator. They will stay fresh and safe for few days after this date if you store them properly.
- "Freshness" or "Best-If-Used-By" dates are used on products like bakery goods or packaged cereals. The date is the last day the product can keep its best quality. After this date, the food may lose some of its freshness and nutritional value.
- An "Expiration" or "Use-By" date is the last date the food should be eaten or used. It is used mostly on products such as refrigerated dough and yeast.
- A "Pack" date is the date the food was manufactured or processed and packaged. This type of date is used for foods that can be kept for a long time, like canned goods.

Source: Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

While MFP public classes have ended for the season in El Dorado County, monthly classes continue in Amador and Calaveras counties. Check out their schedule at <http://ucanr.edu/mfpcs>. El Dorado County MFP free public classes will resume at the end of June – and be sure to come visit us at the El Dorado County Fair in mid-June, as well!

If you are interested in becoming a Master Food Preserver yourself and educating others about safe home food preservation, please complete the online interest form at http://ucanr.edu/be_mfp. El Dorado County MFP training classes begin in March and end in May.

Master Food Preservers are available to answer home food preservation questions; leave a message at (530) 621-5506. For more information about the public education classes and activities, go to the Master Food Preserver website at http://ceeldorado.ucdavis.edu/Master_Food_Preservers/. Sign up to receive our Master Food Preservers E-Newsletter at <http://ucanr.org/mfpnews/>. Find us on facebook too!

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