

# FOOD RESCUE

## Agency Resource Guide

Updated July 2025 FY26



# Retail Rescue Agency Resource Guide

**Intro/Scope:**

Feeding San Diego’s agency partnerships are a key supportive link in the chain between FSD, our donor partners, and the surrounding community in need. These partnerships allow us to connect with more donors throughout San Diego County and to reach thousands more community members in need.

Food Rescue Partner Agencies help to ensure the acquisition, transportation, storage, and dignified distribution of surplus edible food from our Food Donors. Feeding San Diego’s Partner Agencies cultivate and preserve positive and respectful donor relationships by maintaining consistency, communication, and flexibility. Together, we engage our community in the fight to end hunger.

**Purpose:**

This packet will act as a guide for all Food Rescue Partner Agencies of Feeding San Diego. Agencies will use this packet to direct them through the Food Rescue process upholding supply chain integrity and the highest levels of food safety. **Agencies participating in Food Rescue are responsible for training all staff and volunteers on food safety.**

The Guide is structured in the following manner:

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## I. **Agreements**

Acknowledging the expectations and agreements between FSD, our Food Rescue Program Agencies, and our Food Donors will establish comprehensive guidelines for participation in the Food Rescue Program. Each party is responsible for the following items:

### **Feeding San Diego**

*As part of this contract, FSD is expected to:*

- Provide Agency Partners with comprehensive Food Rescue training and access to Partner Portal resources
- Coordinate and establish strategic partnerships between Agency Partners and food donors
- Conduct initial meeting (rollout) with food donor point of contact and food rescue agency to establish pickup logistics, standards, and protocol
- Share both unique and recurring donation pickup opportunities with Agency Partners as they become available
- Act as a mediator between Agency Partners and food donors if and when concerns arise
- Provide food donors with training on donation guidelines to ensure the highest quality surplus food is being donated
- Ensure food donors always have adequate and consistent pickup schedules
- Conduct quarterly in-person visits with food donors to ensure donation program remains effective, efficient, and compliant with FSD standards. Additional visits may be scheduled if warranted (i.e. food safety concerns)
- Submit monthly poundage reports to corporate contacts on behalf of Agency Partners

### **Food Rescue Partner Agency**

*As part of this contract, Food Rescue Program Agencies are expected to:*

- Maintain consistent and clear communication with Food Donor partners. This includes setting and keeping a consistent schedule with assigned Food Donor and notifying donor partners if the agency will be arriving late or needs to cancel
- Maintain accurate donation receipts detailing the total weight of donated product received from Food Donor
- Submit information from donation receipts to FSD through MealConnect in a timely manner.
- Bring and maintain all required safety equipment to each donation pickup, including probe thermometers (thermapens) and freezer blankets, as outlined in the Food Rescue Program Agreement
- Uphold temperature integrity of all donated product. Keep temperature logs throughout the transportation process (see attachments)
- Build positive relationships with Food Donor partner contacts by being consistent, flexible, and respectful

## Food Donor

As part of this contract, Food Donors are expected to:

- Handle donations in a food-safe manner ensuring all donated product is *fit for human consumption*
- Maintain consistent and clear communication with the Food Rescue Program pickup agency. Communication includes informing Agency Partner on where to park, who to speak to upon arrival, where to retrieve donations, and what time works best for donation pickups
- Notify the Food Rescue Team if any questions, issues, or opportunities arise (i.e. acceptable items for donation, scheduling adjustments, new pickup day available, inconsistent pickups)
- Abide by their corporate policies and procedures for donation program first, then utilize FSD guidelines second if and when appropriate

## II. Creating Successful Donor Relations

Creating and maintaining successful donor relations is essential to ensuring continued support from our Food Donor partners. Food Rescue Program agencies must remain mindful and appreciative of the valuable time and effort that Food Donor partners have invested into the food donation program. Establishing clear communication and guidelines at the beginning of the relationship between the Food Rescue Program agency and the Food Donor partner will help to ensure a successful relationship.

### Four Steps to Donor Relationships (Communicate, Appreciate, Respect, Support)

1. Communicate Clearly
  - Communicate your organization's daily pick-up schedule and ask about their daily break schedule.
    - Understand that each of the parties may face barriers in making the pre-determined pickup time (i.e. previous pickup ran late, receiver had to take late lunch break because of large load)
  - If you ever suspect you may be late to a pick-up or you are not able to make a scheduled pick-up day, always CALL the store to let them know as well as alerting your Partnerships Coordinator
  - If you are unsure if an item is intended for donation, ALWAYS ask the donor before taking product. Agency partners must let donors do a final check of donations before loading items into vehicle and leaving premises.
  
2. Express Appreciation
  - Expressing gratitude to your donors for taking the time to gather and sort donations for your organization really goes a long way! This can be an easy way to build trust and rapport with your donors. Here are some suggestions you can use to show your appreciation:
    - Use specific language to make your "Thank You" more impactful. For example, instead of "Thanks for the produce!", try saying, "Thank you for taking the time to sort product for our organization. Many of our clients don't have access to fresh produce and

*nutritious food and they really appreciate your donated product.”*

- Consider giving Thank you cards randomly throughout the year
- Share pictures of your distributions, meals created using the food they provided, or pictures of your pantry stocked with their items
- Invite them for a tour of your facility, a distribution, or a fun upcoming event
- If your organization has printed newsletters, feel free to drop off a copy

3. Be Respectful, but stand firm on food safety

- Let your Food Donor know that food safety is important to your organization and clients. For example:
  - If a Food Donor is cross-contaminating food product, politely inform them that you cannot distribute any product to clients that has been cross-contaminated.
    - For example, you might say, “Unfortunately, when we receive meat and produce mixed in the same box, we have to discard it. To avoid cross-contamination and unnecessary waste in the future, would it be possible to keep meat products separate from produce, please? Thank you, we really appreciate your hard work and understanding.
- If perishable product is sitting outside of a cooler or freezer when you arrive ask:
  - “Do you know how long this product has been out of refrigeration? Would you mind if I check the temperature of the product?”
  - If product is out of temp, you may politely decline those items
- **IMPORTANT:** If your donor continues to handle food donation in an unsafe manner, contact FSD Partnerships Coordinator immediately. Always provide photos when possible.

4. Support your Food Donor

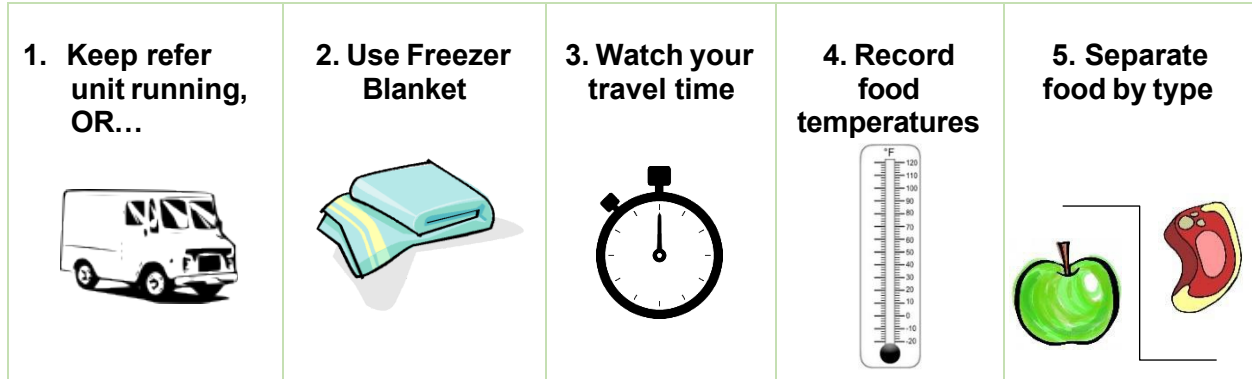
- Make the food donor aware that if they are in need of additional donation pickups, to please contact the Food Rescue Team.
- Inquire if there is any particular product that they are having to discard frequently that could instead be donated.
- Be available to accommodate special requests from your donor

### III. Food Safety Requirements

This section will guide you through the necessary steps in order to ensure food rescue donations are handled in a food safe manner at all times.

A. Pick up and Transportation .....	page 6
B. Product Integrity Check / Reclamation.....	page 7
C. Storage .....	page 9
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## A. Pick-up and transportation



1. Upon arrival at the Food Donor site, if you have a refrigerated truck keep the refrigerated unit of your vehicle running to maintain a food-safe temperature.
2. Food can only be transported in a clean and tidy vehicle. Think Food Safety!
3. If you are transporting perishable product using a passive temperature device, such as a freezer blanket, the product must be delivered to your agency location **within 30 minutes** of product pick-up
4. Ensure perishable products are being held at a safe temperature throughout the entire process

Type of Food	Temperature
Refrigerated food	41°F or lower
Frozen food	Frozen solid. Recommend 0°F or lower
Cut produce	41°F or lower
Whole produce	Dry storage temperatures

- In the event that perishable donations are found unrefrigerated, ask how long they have been out of the cooler/freezer and take the temperature of the product. If the product temperature is out of its safe temperature zone, politely refuse the product
  - Maintain a **Food Safety Travel Temperature Log** of perishable product using a probe thermometer (thermapen) upon pick-up at grocery store and product arrival at agency destination. Please see attachments for copy of travel temperature log
5. Transport product in a properly sorted manner
    - Example: Raw meat product is separated by species and chicken is not stacked on top of beef, non-food product is kept separate from food products, and raw foods are kept separate from ready-to-eat products


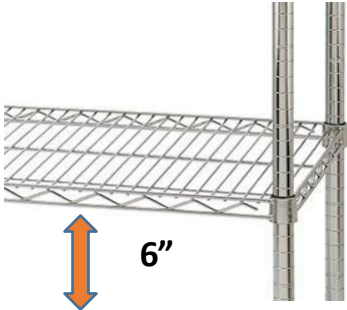
## B. Product Integrity Check

1. All donated product must be sorted prior to being distributed to clients. Product integrity can be checked using the Sorting Guidelines found in Appendix IV.
2. When sorting non-perishable items at your agency site, discard any product that shows signs of cross-contamination or infestation and follow the expiration date guidelines found in Appendix IV.
3. Please see <https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/foodkeeper-app> or <http://www.eatbydate.com> for extensive databases of specific product date extensions.
4. Remember: ***when in doubt, throw it out!***

## Understanding Food Product Dating

	<p><b>Packing or manufacturing date</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Used by manufacturer for tracking and recalls.</li> <li>Not an expiration date.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>SELL-BY date</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is a quality date.</li> <li>It tells how long to display the product for sale.</li> <li>Many foods, especially those refrigerated, can still be safe to eat for a short time after the sell-by date, typically a few days to a week, provided they have been stored properly..</li> </ul>
	<p><b>BEST-BY or BEST IF USED BY date</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is a quality date.</li> <li>It tells clients the date by which the product should be eaten for best flavor or quality.</li> <li>The product is still safe to eat past this date</li> </ul>
	<p><b>USE-BY or EXPIRATION date</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is the last date recommended for the product while at peak quality.</li> <li>For most foods, a "use-by" date is a guideline for quality, not necessarily a safety cut-off. .</li> </ul>

**C. Storage**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Store refrigerated food at 41°F or lower.</li> <li>▪ This includes cut produce.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Keep frozen food frozen solid.</li> <li>▪ Store at 0°F or lower.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Store food only in designated food storage areas.</li> <li>▪ Also practice <b>first in, first out</b> (FIFO) method of inventory. Use and distribute product closest to expiration date first.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Store food at least six inches off the floor.</li> <li>▪ Store food away from walls.</li> <li>▪ Be sure you can always check food for spilling or pests.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Store ready-to-eat food above raw meat, seafood, and poultry.</li> <li>▪ Do not store these items on same shelf.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Store food only in containers made for food.</li> <li>▪ Wrap or cover food before storing it.</li> <li>▪ If you expose food to the air at all then it is required to have a permit with the Department of Health</li> </ul>

## D. Distribution

1. Maintain food safe temperatures when distributing perishable food products to clients. **It is completely your responsibility to make sure all volunteers and staff are properly training and following food safety at your distributions.**
  - Whenever possible, only pull small amounts of cold/frozen product out at a time.
  - Cold and/or Frozen items should be distributed last and held in the cooler for as long as possible.
2. Distribution volunteers must wear gloves when handling food especially ready-to-eat products like produce
3. All food must be held off the ground even if in boxes

**Note on redistribution: Redistributing any product to other organizations is **prohibited**.** This is a Feeding America guideline and required for food safety in the event of recalls etc.



## E. Recalls

In the rare event that food needs to be recalled from distribution, FSD requires agencies to have a process in place to appropriately track and pass along recall information. Food safety is a serious concern that we do not take lightly. The list below is required of each agency:

1. One designated person responsible for recall, whose email is on file with FSD
2. Designated person subscribes to emails from the FDA and USDA to stay on top of recalls that may apply to them from other organizations or companies (if you are picking up from a grocery store not affiliated with us)
  - <http://www.fda.gov/Safety/Recalls/default.htm>
  - <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/recalls-and-public-health-alerts/current-recalls-and-alerts>

3. The person responsible for recalls will also receive emails FSD forwards from Feeding America National

4. In the event that any recalled product has been distributed to clients, it is imperative that you inform your clients. You must post signage informing clients of the recall (recall log p. 16)

\*Please see attachments For Recall Notice Poster

## F. Safety Logs

- Be consistent in maintaining temperature logs. Agencies are responsible for keeping the following safety logs.
  - o **Food Safety Transportation Temp Logs (attachments)**
  - o **Refrigeration and Freezer temperature logs (attachments)**
- All logs should be stored for at least 1 year and will be checked during your annual Monitoring visit with the Partnerships Team.

## IV. Record Keeping and Reporting

All Food Rescue Partner Agencies are required to keep accurate and timely reports of pounds donated. Agencies must report pounds received by submitting multiple receipts specifying the weights of each individual pickup, **on a weekly basis**, using the MealConnect (MC) web platform.

**\*\* Agencies must submit ALL pounds via MealConnect every week**

The MC platform provides an online arena in which agencies can easily input and submit their food rescue pounds (receipts) to Feeding San Diego. Along with outward reporting, all data is saved in the MC website and can be conveniently accessed by the reporting agency. FSD will provide initial training to partner agencies in MealConnect use. Please reach out to your Partnerships Coordinator for additional information and training videos for more support.

If you have any questions about the information in this guide or the requirements, please don't hesitate to reach out to your Partnerships Coordinator.

<https://feedingsandiego.org/partner-portal/>





## Category Explanation

**Refrigerated Deli** (potato salad, premade sandwiches, rotisserie chicken, deli prepared pizzas, etc.)  
*41°F or below*

**Refrigerated Meat** (whole chicken, ground beef, etc.)  
*41°F or below*

**Refrigerated Dairy and Beverages** (milk, yogurt, juice, cheese)  
*41°F or below*

**Frozen** (ice cream, frozen dinners, frozen vegetables, frozen meat, etc.)  
*Frozen to the touch*

**Cut Produce** (packaged leafy greens, salads, cut fruits and vegetables)  
*41°F or below*

**Refrigerated Bakery** (cake pastries, etc. with "Refrigeration Required" on package)  
*41°F or below*

**Prepared** (cooked food items prepared at the donor site)  
*41°F or below*

**Non-Refrigerated Beverages** (Water bottles, shelf stable drinks, etc.)  
*Room temp.*

**Whole Produce** – *Room temp*

**Dry Grocery** – Canned goods, cereal, crackers, pasta, condiments, bread/bakery, etc.  
*Room temp*

*Remember to always have your Thermopen, Freezer Blanket, and Scale ready! To learn more please watch (Found on the Partner Portal)*

[\*Food Safety and Donation Pickup \(Module 3\)\*](#)

[\*How to Use Food Rescue Equipment \(Module 4 English Version\)\*](#)

[\*How to Use Food Rescue Equipment \(Module 4 Spanish Version\)\*](#)

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**FOOD STORAGE - Required Temperatures:**

**Dry Storage: 35°F – 75°F**

**Refrigeration: 32°F – 40°F**

**Freezer: 0°F and below**



**DAILY TEMPERATURE LOG**

**Unit #:**

To ensure proper food safety, record the temperature of your refrigerator/freezer unit(s) each day. Please post this log outside of your unit and then retain for a minimum of 3 years for your records.

<b>Day</b>	<b>January</b>	<b>February</b>	<b>March</b>	<b>April</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>June</b>
1	/	/	/	/	/	/
2	/	/	/	/	/	/
3	/	/	/	/	/	/
4	/	/	/	/	/	/
5	/	/	/	/	/	/
6	/	/	/	/	/	/
7	/	/	/	/	/	/
8	/	/	/	/	/	/
9	/	/	/	/	/	/
10	/	/	/	/	/	/
11	/	/	/	/	/	/
12	/	/	/	/	/	/
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24	/	/	/	/	/	/
25	/	/	/	/	/	/
26	/	/	/	/	/	/
27	/	/	/	/	/	/
28	/	/	/	/	/	/
29	/	/	/	/	/	/
30	/	/	/	/	/	/
31	/	/	/	/	/	/

FOOD STORAGE - Required Temperatures:

**Dry Storage: 35°F – 75°F**

**Refrigeration: 32°F – 40°F**

**Freezer: 0°F and below**

**DAILY TEMPERATURE LOG**

Unit #:

To ensure proper food safety, record the temperature of your refrigerator/freezer unit(s) each day. Please post this log outside of your unit and then retain for a minimum of 3 years for your records.

Day	July	August	September	October	November	December
1						
2	/	/	/	/	/	/
3	/	/	/	/	/	/
4	/	/	/	/	/	/
5	/	/	/	/	/	/
6	/	/	/	/	/	/
7	/	/	/	/	/	/
8	/	/	/	/	/	/
9	/	/	/	/	/	/
10	/	/	/	/	/	/
11	/	/	/	/	/	/
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24	/	/	/	/	/	/
25	/	/	/	/	/	/
26	/	/	/	/	/	/
27	/	/	/	/	/	/
28	/	/	/	/	/	/
29	/	/	/	/	/	/
30	/	/	/	/	/	/
31	/	/	/	/	/	/

# Product Recall Notice



<b>Product Name:</b>	
<b>Product Size:</b>	
<b>Date Range:</b>	
<b>Product Lot#, UPC#, or Batch#:</b>	
<b>Reason for Recall:</b>	
<b>Client Instructions:</b>	

**Agency Name:**

**Date:**

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## Food Rescue Program Donation Receipt

**Date:**

**Agency Name:**

**Contact name:**

**Phone #:**

**Donor Name & #:**

Category	Pounds
<b>Bakery</b> *bread, cakes, cookies, bagels, pastries, etc.	
<b>Beverages</b> *juice, water, sports drinks, etc.	
<b>Dairy</b> *milk, eggs, cheese, yogurt, sour cream, coffee creamer, etc.	
<b>Meat/Deli</b> *beef, chicken, pork, lunch meats, etc.	
<b>Mix</b> *grocery items, dry or canned goods, cereal, boxed items, etc.	
<b>Non Food</b> *general merchandise, pet food, cleaning products, health & beauty items, paper products, etc.	
<b>Prepared / Perishable</b> *service deli, pre-made sandwiches, salads, tuna salad, mac n cheese, humus, etc.	
<b>Produce</b> *perishable whole fruits and vegetables	
<b>TOTAL</b>	

**Agency Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Resources to use and be checking for updates regarding food dating - Code dates on products do not indicate when food is unsafe to eat. Please refer to these handy guidelines which only apply to UNOPENED FOOD.**

<https://www.fda.gov/food/consumers/how-cut-food-waste-and-maintain-food-safety>

<https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/foodkeeper-app>

<https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/food-product-dating>

### **How Food Waste and Food Safety Are Connected**

The major sources of food waste in the United States are the food industry and consumers. Within the food industry, waste occurs at every step — on the farm and with packers, processors, distributors, and retailers. Some of it is the result of economic forces, some of management problems, and some is caused simply by dumping products that are less than perfect in appearance.

### **Food Product Dating and Food Waste**

Food waste by consumers may result from a misunderstanding of what the phrases on product date labels mean, along with uncertainty about storage of perishable foods. Confusion over date labeling accounts for an estimated 20 percent of consumer food waste.

### **How to Best to Store Perishables and How Long They Will Keep Safely**

The [FoodKeeper](#), developed cooperatively by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Cornell University and the Food Marketing Institute, is a complete guide to how long virtually every food available in the United States will keep in the pantry, in the refrigerator, and in the freezer.

The Fresh Fruits section, for example, covers apples (3 weeks in the pantry, 4 – 6 weeks in the fridge, and — only if cooked — 8 months in the freezer) to pomegranates (2 – 5 days pantry, 1 – 3 months fridge, and 10 – 12 months freezer). The Meat, Poultry and Seafood sections are equally complete, and include smoked as well fresh products. Access the FoodKeeper or download it as a mobile application ([Android DevicesExternal Link Disclaimer](#) | [Apple DevicesExternal Link Disclaimer](#))

The [Refrigerator & Freezer Storage Chart](#) includes safe storage times for many widely-used foods.

### **More Ways to Avoid Wasting Food**

- Check the temperature setting of your fridge. Use a refrigerator thermometer to be sure the temperature is at 40° F or below to keep foods safe. The temperature of your freezer should be 0° F or below.
- Avoid "overpacking:" Cold air must circulate around refrigerated foods to keep them properly chilled.
- Wipe up spills immediately: It not only reduces the growth of Listeria bacteria (which can grow at refrigerator temperatures), cleaning up spills — especially drips from thawing meats — will help prevent "cross-contamination," where bacteria from one food spread to another.
- Use your freezer! Freezing is a great way to store most foods to keep them from going bad until you are ready to eat them. The FoodKeeper has information on how long most common foods can be stored in the freezer.
- Check your fridge often to keep track of what you have and what needs to be used. Eat or freeze items before you need to throw them away.

## How to Cut Food Waste and Maintain Food Safety



*Practice habits that are good for your health, your wallet, and the environment!*

Food safety is a major concern. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that there are about 48 million cases of foodborne illness annually – the equivalent of sickening 1 in 6 Americans each year. And each year these illnesses result in an estimated 128,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths.

Food waste is also a major concern. Wasted food is a huge challenge to our natural resources, our environment, and our pocketbooks:

**Our resources?** Each year getting food to U.S. tables requires:

- 80 percent of our freshwater,
- 10 percent of our available energy, and,
- Half of our land.

**The environment?** Organic waste, mostly food, is the second biggest component of landfills, and landfills are the third largest source of methane emissions. Methane is a major factor in global warming because it is so effective at absorbing the sun’s heat, which warms the atmosphere.

**And, finally, our pocketbooks:** Between 30 and 40 percent of food in the United States goes uneaten – as much as 20 pounds of food per person per month. That means Americans are throwing out the equivalent of \$165 billion in food each year.

### How Food Waste and Food Safety Are Connected

The major sources of food waste in the United States are the food industry and consumers. Within the food industry, waste occurs at every step — on the farm and with packers, processors, distributors, and retailers. Some of it is the result of economic forces, some of management problems, and some is caused simply by dumping products that are less than perfect in appearance.



But food waste by consumers may often result from fears about food safety caused by misunderstanding of what food product dating actually means, along with uncertainty about storage of perishable foods.

**WARNING:** If food is obviously spoiled – it’s abnormally soft, discolored, moldy, or has a strong unpleasant smell – *discard it*, no matter how properly or how short a time it has been stored.

## What are Food Product Dates?

Many consumers misunderstand the purpose and meaning of the date labels that often appear on packaged foods. Confusion over date labeling accounts for an estimated 20 percent of consumer food waste.

Except for infant formula, manufacturers are not required by Federal law or regulation to place quality-based date labels on packaged food.

There are no uniform or universally accepted descriptions used on food labels for open dating (calendar dates) in the United States. As a result, there are a wide variety of phrases used for product dating.

FDA supports efforts by the food industry to make “**Best if Used By**” the standard phrase to indicate the date when a product will be at its best flavor and quality. Consumers should examine foods for signs of spoilage that are past their “Best if used by” date. If the products have changed noticeably in color, consistency or texture, consumers may want to avoid eating them. If you have questions or concerns about the quality, safety and labeling of the packaged foods you buy, you are encouraged to reach out to the company that produced the product. Many packaged foods provide the company’s contact information on the package.

Manufacturers apply date labels at their own discretion and for a variety of reasons. The most common is to inform consumers and retailers of the date to which they can expect the food to retain its desired quality and flavor.

Industry is moving toward more uniform practices for date labeling of packaged foods. But, for now, consumers may see different phrases used for product dating, such as Sell By, Best By, Expires on, etc.



## Where to Learn How Best to Store Perishables and How Long They Will Keep Safely



*The FoodKeeper*, developed cooperatively by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Cornell University and the Food Marketing Institute, is a complete guide to how long virtually every food available in the United States will keep in the pantry, in the refrigerator, and in the freezer. The Fresh Fruits section, for example, covers apples (3 weeks in the pantry, 4 – 6 weeks in the fridge, and — only if cooked — 8 months in the freezer)

to pomegranates (2 – 5 days pantry, 1 – 3 months fridge, and 10 – 12 months freezer). The Meat, Poultry and Seafood sections are equally complete, and include smoked as well fresh products.

Access the *FoodKeeper* or download it as a mobile application:

- For Android devices — <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=gov.usda.fsis.foodkeeper2&hl=en>
- For Apple devices — <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/usda-foodkeeper/id978186100?mt=8>



The Refrigerator & Freezer Storage Chart on page 4 includes safe storage times for many widely-used foods.

## More Ways to Avoid Wasting Food

- Be aware of how much food you throw away.
- Don’t buy more food than can be used before it spoils.
- Plan meals and use shopping lists. Think about what you are buying and when it will be eaten. Check the fridge and pantry to avoid buying what you already have.
- Avoid impulse and bulk purchases, especially produce and dairy that have a limited shelf life. Promotions encouraging purchases of unusual or bulk products

often result in consumers buying foods outside their typical needs or family preferences, and portions — potentially large portions — of these foods may end up in the trash.

- When eating out, become a more mindful eater. If you're not terribly hungry request smaller portions. Bring your leftovers home and refrigerate or freeze them within two hours, and check the Food Keeper to see how long they'll be safe to eat.
- Check the temperature setting of your fridge. Use a refrigerator thermometer to be sure the temperature is at 40° F or below to keep foods safe. The temperature of your freezer should be 0° F or below.
- Avoid "overpacking:" Cold air must circulate around refrigerated foods to keep them properly chilled.
- Wipe up spills immediately: It not only reduces the growth of Listeria bacteria (which can grow at refrigerator temperatures), cleaning up spills — especially drips from thawing meats — will help prevent "cross-contamination," where bacteria from one food spread to another.
- Keep it covered: Store refrigerated foods in covered containers or sealed storage bags, and check leftovers daily for spoilage.
- Refrigerate peeled or cut veggies for freshness and to keep them from going bad.
- Use your freezer! Freezing is a great way to store most foods to keep them from going bad until you are ready to eat them. The *FoodKeeper* has information on how long most common foods can be stored in the freezer.
- Check your fridge often to keep track of what you have and what needs to be used. Eat or freeze items before you need to throw them away.
- To keep foods safe when entertaining, remember the 2-Hour Rule: don't leave perishable foods out at room temperature for more than two hours, unless you're keeping hot foods hot and cold foods cold. If you're eating outdoors and the temperature is above 90° F, perishable foods shouldn't be left out for more than one hour.



## About Foodborne Illness

### Know the Symptoms

Consuming dangerous foodborne bacteria will usually cause illness within 1 to 3 days of eating the contaminated food. However, sickness can also occur within 20 minutes or up to 6 weeks later. Although most people will recover from a foodborne illness within a short period of time, some can develop chronic, severe, or even life-threatening health problems.

Foodborne illness can sometimes be confused with other illnesses that have similar symptoms. The symptoms of foodborne illness can include:

- Vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal pain
- Flu-like symptoms, such as fever, headache, and body ache

### Take Action

If you think that you or a family member has a foodborne illness, **contact your healthcare provider immediately**. Also, **report** the suspected foodborne illness to FDA in either of these ways:

- Contact the Consumer Complaint Coordinator in your area. Locate a coordinator here: <http://www.fda.gov/Safety/ReportaProblem/ConsumerComplaintCoordinators>
- Contact MedWatch, FDA's Safety Information and Adverse Event Reporting Program:  
**By Phone:** 1-800-FDA-1088  
**Online:** File a voluntary report at <http://www.fda.gov/medwatch>

## REFRIGERATOR & FREEZER STORAGE CHART

These short but safe time limits will help keep refrigerated food 40° F (4° C) from spoiling or becoming dangerous. Since product dates aren't a guide for safe use of a product, consult this chart and follow these tips.

- Purchase the product before "sell-by" or expiration dates.
- Follow handling recommendations on product.
- Keep meat and poultry in its package until just before using.
- If freezing meat and poultry in its original package longer than 2 months, overwrap these packages with airtight heavy-duty foil, plastic wrap, or freezer paper; or place the package inside a plastic bag.

Because freezing 0° F (-18° C) keeps food safe indefinitely, the following recommended storage times are for quality only.

Product	Refrigerator	Freezer
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### Eggs

Fresh, in shell	3 - 5 weeks	Don't freeze
Raw yolks, whites	2 - 4 days	1 year
Hard cooked	1 week	Don't freeze
Liquid pasteurized eggs or egg substitutes, opened	3 days	Don't freeze
unopened	10 days	1 year

### TV Dinners, Frozen Casseroles

Keep frozen until ready to heat		3 - 4 months
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### Deli & Vacuum-Packed Products

Store-prepared (or homemade) egg, chicken, tuna, ham, macaroni salads	3 - 5 days	Don't freeze
Pre-stuffed pork & lamb chops, chicken breasts stuffed w/dressing	1 day	Don't freeze
Store-cooked convenience meals	3 - 4 days	Don't freeze
Commercial brand vacuum-packed dinners with USDA seal, unopened	2 weeks	Don't freeze

### Raw Hamburger, Ground & Stew Meat

Hamburger & stew meats	1 - 2 days	3 - 4 months
Ground turkey, veal, pork, lamb	1 - 2 days	3 - 4 months

### Ham, Corned Beef

Corned beef in pouch with pickling juices	5 - 7 days	Drained, 1 month
Ham, canned, labeled "Keep Refrigerated," unopened	6 - 9 months	Don't freeze
opened	3 - 5 days	1 - 2 months
Ham, fully cooked, whole	7 days	1 - 2 months
Ham, fully cooked, half	3 - 5 days	1 - 2 months
Ham, fully cooked, slices	3 - 4 days	1 - 2 months

### Hot Dogs & Lunch Meats (in freezer wrap)

Hot dogs, opened package	1 week	1 - 2 months
unopened package	2 weeks	1 - 2 months
Lunch meats, opened package	3 - 5 days	1 - 2 months
unopened package	2 weeks	1 - 2 months

Product	Refrigerator	Freezer
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### Soups & Stews

Vegetable or meat-added & mixtures of them	3 - 4 days	2 - 3 months
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### Bacon & Sausage

Bacon	7 days	1 month
Sausage, raw from pork, beef, chicken or turkey	1 - 2 days	1 - 2 months
Smoked breakfast links, patties	7 days	1 - 2 months

### Fresh Meat (Beef, Veal, Lamb, & Pork)

Steaks	3 - 5 days	6 - 12 months
Chops	3 - 5 days	4 - 6 months
Roasts	3 - 5 days	4 - 12 months
Variety meats (tongue, kidneys, liver, heart, chitterlings)	1 - 2 days	3 - 4 months

### Meat Leftovers

Cooked meat & meat dishes	3 - 4 days	2 - 3 months
Gravy & meat broth	1 - 2 days	2 - 3 months

### Fresh Poultry

Chicken or turkey, whole	1 - 2 days	1 year
Chicken or turkey, parts	1 - 2 days	9 months
Giblets	1 - 2 days	3 - 4 months

### Cooked Poultry, Leftover

Fried chicken	3 - 4 days	4 months
Cooked poultry dishes	3 - 4 days	4 - 6 months
Pieces, plain	3 - 4 days	4 months
Pieces covered with broth, gravy	3 - 4 days	6 months
Chicken nuggets, patties	3 - 4 days	1 - 3 months

### Fish & Shellfish

Lean fish	1 - 2 days	6 - 8 months
Fatty fish	1 - 2 days	2 - 3 months
Cooked fish	3 - 4 days	4 - 6 months
Smoked fish	14 days	2 months
Fresh shrimp, scallops, crawfish, squid	1 - 2 days	3 - 6 months
Canned seafood (Pantry, 5 years)	after opening	out of can
	3 - 4 days	2 months

## Cold Food Storage Chart

Food	Type	Refrigerator [40°F (4°C) or below]	Freezer [0°F (-18°C) or below]
<b>Salad</b>	Egg, chicken, ham, tuna, and macaroni salads	3 to 4 days	Does not freeze well
<b>Hot dogs</b>	Opened package	1 week	1 to 2 months
	Unopened package	2 weeks	1 to 2 months
<b>Luncheon meat</b>	Opened package or deli sliced	3 to 5 days	1 to 2 months
	Unopened package	2 weeks	1 to 2 months
<b>Bacon and sausage</b>	Bacon	1 week	1 month
	Sausage, raw, from chicken, turkey, pork, or beef	1 to 2 days	1 to 2 months
	Sausage, fully cooked, from chicken, turkey, pork, or beef	1 week	1 to 2 months
	Sausage, purchased frozen	After cooking, 3-4 days	1-2 months from date of purchase
<b>Hamburger, ground meats and ground poultry</b>	Hamburger, ground beef, turkey, chicken, other poultry, veal, pork, lamb, and mixtures of them	1 to 2 days	3 to 4 months
<b>Fresh beef, veal, lamb, and pork</b>	Steaks	3 to 5 days	4 to 12 months
	Chops	3 to 5 days	4 to 12 months
	Roasts	3 to 5 days	4 to 12 months
<a href="#">Ham</a>	Fresh, uncured, uncooked	3 to 5 days	6 months
	Fresh, uncured, cooked	3 to 4 days	3 to 4 months
	Cured, cook-before-eating, uncooked	5 to 7 days or "use by" date	3 to 4 months

Food	Type	Refrigerator [40°F (4°C) or below]	Freezer [0°F (-18°C) or below]
	Fully-cooked, vacuum-sealed at plant, unopened	2 weeks or "use by" date	1 to 2 months
	Cooked, store-wrapped, whole	1 week	1 to 2 months
	Cooked, store-wrapped, slices, half, or spiral cut	3 to 5 days	1 to 2 months
	Country ham, cooked	1 week	1 month
	Canned, labeled "Keep Refrigerated," unopened	6 to 9 months	Do not freeze
	Canned, shelf-stable, opened  <b>Note:</b> An unopened, shelf-stable, canned ham can be stored at room temperature for 2 years.	3 to 4 days	1 to 2 months
	Prosciutto, Parma or Serrano ham, dry Italian or Spanish type, cut	2 to 3 months	1 month
<b>Fresh poultry</b>	Chicken or turkey, whole	1 to 2 days	1 year
	Chicken or turkey, pieces	1 to 2 days	9 months
<b>Fin Fish</b>	Fatty Fish (bluefish, catfish, mackerel, mullet, salmon, tuna, etc.)	1 - 3 Days	2 - 3 Months
	Lean Fish (cod, flounder, haddock, halibut, sole, etc.)		6 - 8 Months
	Lean Fish (pollock, ocean perch, rockfish, sea trout.)		4 - 8 Months
<b>Shellfish</b>	Fresh Crab Meat	2 - 4 Days	2 - 4 Months

Food	Type	Refrigerator [40°F (4°C) or below]	Freezer [0°F (-18°C) or below]
	Fresh Lobster	2 - 4 Days	2 - 4 Months
	Live Crab, Lobster	1 day .	Not recommended
	Live Clams, Mussels, Oysters, and Scallops	5 - 10 Days	Not recommended
	Shrimp, Crayfish	3 - 5 Days	6 - 18 Months
	Shucked Clams, Mussels, Oysters, and Scallops	3 - 10 Days	3 - 4 Months
	Squid	1 - 3 Days	6 - 18 Months
<b>Eggs</b>	Raw eggs in shell	3 to 5 weeks	Do not freeze in shell. Beat yolks and whites together, then freeze.
	Raw egg whites and yolks <b>Note:</b> Yolks do not freeze well	2 to 4 days	12 months
	Raw egg accidentally frozen in shell <b>Note:</b> Toss any frozen eggs with a broken shell	Use immediately after thawing	Keep frozen, then refrigerate to thaw
	Hard-cooked eggs	1 week	Do not freeze
	Egg substitutes, liquid, unopened	1 week	Do not freeze
	Egg substitutes, liquid, opened	3 days	Do not freeze
	Egg substitutes, frozen, unopened	After thawing, 1 week or refer to "use by" date	12 months
	Egg substitutes, frozen, opened	After thawing, 3 to 4 days or refer to "use by" date	Do not freeze
	Casseroles with eggs	After baking, 3 to 4 days	After baking, 2 to 3 months
	Eggnog, commercial	3 to 5 days	6 months

<b>Food</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Refrigerator [40°F (4°C) or below]</b>	<b>Freezer [0°F (-18°C) or below]</b>
	Eggnog, homemade	2 to 4 days	Do not freeze
	Pies: Pumpkin or pecan	After baking, 3 to 4 days	After baking, 1 to 2 months
	Pies: Custard and chiffon	After baking, 3 to 4 days	Do not freeze
	Quiche with filling	After baking, 3 to 5 days	After baking, 2 to 3 months
<b>Soups and stews</b>	Vegetable or meat added	3 to 4 days	2 to 3 months
<b>Leftovers</b>	Cooked meat or poultry	3 to 4 days	2 to 6 months
	Chicken nuggets or patties	3 to 4 days	1 to 3 months
	Pizza	3 to 4 days	1 to 2 months

Date Last Reviewed September 19, 2023