FOOD SAFETY: STORING FOODS

After a grocery shopping trip, use the storage tips below to help keep foods safe in the refrigerator, freezer, and pantry.

FOOD SAFETY: THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT

To find out how long foods stay safe in the refrigerator, freezer, and pantry, download the US Department of Agriculture's *FoodKeeper* app or check out the online version at www.foodsafety.gov/keep /foodkeeperapp

Where Foods Go in the Fridge

▸ Raw meats, poultry, and seafood go on the bottom shelf in their original packaging or in sealed containers to keep their juices from dripping onto other foods. To further prevent dripping, place these foods on a plate.

▸ Ready-to-eat foods, such as deli items or prepared meals, go on the upper shelves in clean, airtight containers.

▸ Unwashed fresh fruits and vegetables go in crisper drawers. Washing produce before storage may lead to the growth of mold.

▸ Perishable foods like eggs and milk go on refrigerator shelves, not in the door where the temperature can change from opening and closing it.

▸ Condiments go in the refrigerator door.

▸ Foods that are refrigerated at the supermarket go in the refrigerator at home.

Freezer Storage Tips

▸ Freeze raw meat, poultry, fish, and seafood before the "use by" date on the package.

▸ Leftovers should be frozen within 3 to 4 days.

▸ Do not freeze (or refrigerate) prepared or cooked foods left at room temperature for more than 2 hours (or 1 hour if the temperature is above 90 °F)—throw them away.

Pantry Strategies

▸ Store shelf-stable foods in a cool, dry area—not above the stove or sink. Moisture and heat can cause foods to spoil and allow pests (like insects) to reproduce more easily.

▸ Read food labels for storage information. Some shelf-stable foods must be refrigerated after opening.

▸ Regularly check for foods that have become a food-safety risk and throw them away. For example:

  ▸ Bulging, leaking, dented, or rusted food cans
  ▸ Moldy bread or muffins
  ▸ Potatoes, onions, and garlic if they are moldy, smell "off," or have soft spots

▸ Store home cleaners and other household chemicals in a separate area away from food. Always keep the original label on chemicals and cleaning products to prevent misuse.

Keeping a Clean Routine

In the Fridge

▸ Clean the inside of the refrigerator weekly with hot, soapy water and a clean cloth or paper towel.

  ▸ *Tip:* Clean the refrigerator before you go grocery shopping, when there are fewer items inside.

▸ Wipe up spills right away with hot, soapy water and a clean cloth or paper towel.

In the Pantry

▸ Check open containers for pests. If you find pests, check all other foods, throw away affected items, and thoroughly clean the storage space.

▸ Clean up spills or crumbs right away to avoid attracting pests.

▸ Keep foods off the floor so they won't attract pests.