

Storing Food Safely

Revised by Amber Benson and Dianne Christensen¹

pubs.nmsu.edu • Cooperative Extension Service • Guide E-118

The College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences is an engine for economic and community development in New Mexico, improving the lives of New Mexicans through academic, research, and Extension programs.



New Mexico State University
aces.nmsu.edu



Photo by Eilo, 2020.

Why store food? It is essential when managing food storage to understand your reasons for storing food and your goals. Consider the following benefits:

- Convenience for busy lives in having food readily available.
- Supports healthy food choices.
- Hedges inflation by buying food at lower prices and storing it.
- Provides food security when food may become scarce.
- Provides emergency preparedness in having food in natural disasters.
- Supports religious beliefs.

LOCATION

As you consider your food storage options, there are several key factors to consider.

Space: How much space do you have? Is it clean, dry, and secure? Keeping stored food off the floor prevents it from coming in contact with moisture. Shelving needs to be 6 inches from the floor and 18 inches from outer building walls.

Temperature: Locate storage in areas free from fluctuating temperatures (such as a garage). Look for cool areas away from heating sources and appliances. Select dry areas with little or no humidity, if possible. The storage temperature should be kept at about 50°F to maintain food quality, although 60 to 70°F is acceptable. Keep foods in the coolest cabinets in the kitchen, not near the oven, stove, or refrigerator exhaust, in particular oils that are subject to turning rancid

¹Respectively, Associate Professor and Bernalillo County Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Agent; and Assistant Professor and Bernalillo County Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Agent. NMSU.

from heat. (For fresh foods it is important to keep temperatures above 140°F or below 40°F. Keep these foods out of the “danger zone” of 40-140°F which are ideal conditions for the growth of common bacteria that can cause spoilage and food related illness).

Light: Dark areas maintain food quality longer. Energy from light can degrade food’s nutritional content and appearance.

Shelf Life: Length of time food will be stored, which is important to preserve food safety and food quality.

CHECK THE LABEL FOR STORAGE DATES

What do packaging dates mean? The goal of date labels is to inform consumers of the date to which consumers can expect the food to retain its optimal quality, including flavor, color, and/or texture.

- Dates on food packaging are not mandatory by the FDA (with the exception of infant formula).
- Dates listed by manufacturers are at the discretion of the manufacturer.
- Dates do not always indicate a “Food Safe” date.
- “Sell by” means retailers should sell the product by that date. Product is still safe to consume after this date.
- “Best if used by” means the consumer should use the product by the date listed for best quality and flavor.
- “Use by” the last date recommended for use at peak quality. Product quality (flavor, appearance, texture) declines after that date.
- “Closed or coded dates” are packing numbers used by the manufacturer. Used for recalls.

Note: Do not use infant formula and baby food after the “use-by” date.

Additional resources on how long to store food can be found in the attached chart or by using the FoodKeeper app on your phone or computer (<https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/blog/new-usda-foodkeeper-app-your-new-tool-smart-food-storage>).

WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!

Vision and sense of smell are big indicators of food quality. You can smell the food but never taste the food in question. When in doubt, throw it out! Do not consume packaged or canned foods if the following conditions exist:

- Leaking or staining
- Swelling, especially bulging cans
- Rust
- Badly dented, crimped, or pinched with sharp edges
- Cracked container
- Foul odor or change of color
- Safety seals are broken or missing
- Lids are loose or missing

PANTRY ORGANIZATION AND FOOD SAFETY MANAGEMENT

The keys to effectively storing and using food are labeling and rotating food using the F-I-F-O (first in and first out) method. Keep a marking pen, labels, or masking tape handy to write the contents and date stored on all dried and refrigerated/frozen foods. Once a month, sort through your stored foods to be sure the oldest dates are at the front and the freshest dates are at the back. When you add items, be sure to place them in the back so you can use the oldest dates first.

DRY STORAGE

Use metal, glass, and plastic containers, or storage bags with tight-fitting zippers or lids to keep out moisture, air, and insects. Store foods that align with your food storage goals. Find or create recipes that allow you to use these foods for quick healthy meals:

- Protein: canned meats/seafood, nut butters, canned beans.
- Vegetables/Fruits, canned.
- Onions, garlic, potatoes.
- Starch: Rice, pasta, grains.
- Liquids and sauces: broth, canned soup, canned tomatoes, fruit and vegetable juice, powdered milk.
- Flavors: herbs, spices, soy, and Worcestershire sauce.
- Staples: Flour, sugar, baking soda/powder, salt, nuts, raisins, jam, honey, oils.

REFRIGERATOR AND FREEZER STORAGE

Set your refrigerator between 34 and 40°F and use a thermometer placed near the door in the refrigerator to alert you to temperature fluctuations. Don’t overload the refrigerator or line the shelves since air must circulate freely to cool all foods evenly. Clean the refrigerator regularly to remove spoiled foods so that bacteria can’t be passed to other foods. Store food in plastic wrap, storage bags, foil, or air-tight containers to keep food from drying out.

The freezer should be set at 0°F or lower, and a thermometer should be used to monitor freezer temperature, which should not rise above 5°F. Check the thermostat for the proper setting. To package items for the freezer, especially meat and poultry, remove the product from its original container (do not wash) and divide it up according to desired serving portions in freezer bags. Gently press down to remove air and be sure the zipper seal is tight. For soups and stews, portion the desired serving size, remove air, check the seal, and freeze flat. Later when frozen, you can organize these items like a filing system upright so you can readily see what is available.

Before freezing, label all freezer foods with the date packed, type of food, and weight or number of servings. Foods that freeze well include:

- Protein: Seafood, beef and poultry
- Vegetables/Fruits
- Bread and baked goods
- Soups, stews, casseroles
- Panko and breadcrumbs
- Nuts

Partially thawed food can be refrozen safely as long as it still has ice crystals and has been held no longer than a day at refrigerator temperatures. Refreezing, however, may cause a loss of quality, so it is best to cook the food and then refreeze it. Combination dishes (stews, soups, casseroles, etc.) that have been thawed should not be refrozen.

FOOD STORAGE CHART/FOODKEEPER

Storage times listed in the following table are intended to be useful guidelines, not hard and fast rules. Some foods may deteriorate more quickly, and some may last longer than the times suggested. The times will vary depending on growing conditions, harvesting techniques, manufacturing processes, transportation and distribution conditions, nature of the food, and storage temperatures. Remember to buy foods in reasonable quantities and rotate the products in your pantry, refrigerator, and freezer. You can also find this information by using the FoodKeeper app (<https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/foodkeeper-app>) on your computer or phone. Trust your own common sense. As a helpful reminder, store this guide in your kitchen or pantry.

RESOURCES

- USDA (<https://www.usda.gov/>)
- FDA (<https://www.fda.gov/>)

REFERENCES

1. Food Safety. (2019). *Foodkeeper app*. <https://www.food-safety.gov/keep-food-safe/foodkeeper-app>
2. Yuvenco, C. (2018). *Planning some spring cleaning? A check list for a food-safe pantry and Refrigerator*. U.S. Department of Agriculture. <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/blog/planning-some-spring-cleaning-check-list-food-safe-pantry-and-refrigerator>
3. Buzby, J. (2020). *How to reduce food waste at home*. U.S. Department of Agriculture. <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/blog/how-reduce-food-waste-home>
4. Gravely, M. (2013). *Before You Toss Food, Wait. check it out!*. U.S. Department of Agriculture. <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/blog/you-toss-food-wait-check-it-out>
5. U.S. Food and Drug Administration. (2023). *Are you storing food safely?* <https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/are-you-storing-food-safely>
6. U.S. Food and Drug Administration. (2024). *Food safety in your kitchen*. <https://www.fda.gov/food/buy-store-serve-safe-food/food-safety-your-kitchen>
7. U.S. Food and Drug Administration. (2024). *How to cut food waste and maintain food safety*. <https://www.fda.gov/food/consumers/how-cut-food-waste-and-maintain-food-safety>
8. U.S. Food and Drug Administration. (2024). *Tips to reduce food waste*. U.S. Food and Drug Administration. <https://www.fda.gov/food/consumers/tips-reduce-food-waste>

Table 1. Food Storage Timetable				
FOOD	REFRIGERATOR	PANTRY	FREEZER	SPECIAL HANDLING
Breads/cereals/grains: In general, keep cool and dry. For maximum storage time once opened, store in airtight containers. Refrigeration may increase shelf life for some items.				
Bread, rolls (store bought)	2–3 weeks	14–18 days	3–5 months	Homemade breads may have a shorter shelf life due to lack of preservatives.
Biscuit, muffin mixes		9 months		
Cereals				Cereals should be stored at room temperature in tightly closed containers to keep out moisture and insects.
Ready-to-eat (unopened)		6–12 months		
(opened)		2–3 months		
Ready-to-cook oatmeal, etc.		6–12 months		
Cornmeal	12 months	6–12 months		Keep tightly closed. Refrigeration may prolong shelf life.
Flour				Whole wheat flour can be stored in the refrigerator to slow rancidity of the natural oils.
White	12 months	6–8 months		
Whole wheat	6-8 months	3-6 months	24 months	
Yeast (dry)	4 months	24 months	6 months	Keep dry and cool. Refer to manufacturer’s expiration guidance.
Grits		12 months		
Pancake mixes		9 months		
Pasta		24 months*		*Unopened. 1 year if opened.
Rice				
White		24 months		
Brown		12 months		
Mixes		12-24 months		
Refrigerated biscuit roll, pastry and cookie dough	Expiration date on label		Not recommended.	
Tortillas, flour	3 months	3 months	6 months	Storage times may vary depending on ingredients. Best if refrigerated once opened. Can be frozen.
Corn	2-3 months	1-2 months		
Dairy products: Store in coldest part of refrigerator (40°F), never in door.				
Butter	1-2 months		6–9 months	Wrap or cover tightly. Hold only a 2-day supply in keeper.
Buttermilk	1-2 weeks		3 months	Cover tightly. Flavor not affected if buttermilk separates.

FOOD	REFRIGERATOR	PANTRY	FREEZER	SPECIAL HANDLING
Cheese				Keep all cheese tightly packaged in moisture-proof wrap. Do not eat moldy cheese.
Cottage	2 weeks		Not recommended.	
Cream, Neufchâtel	2 weeks		Not recommended.	Hard cheese can be frozen but becomes crumbly. Better if grated.
Hard and wax coated				
Cheddar, Edam, Gouda, Swiss, brick, etc.				
(unopened)	3–6 months		6 months	
(opened)	1 month			
Parmesan, Romano				Refrigerate after opening for prolonged storage. If cheese picks up moisture, mold may develop.
(unopened)	3-6 months		6 months	
(opened)	1 months			Refrigerate after opening. Close or wrap tightly.
Ricotta	1-2 weeks		Not recommended.	
Process cheese products	3–4 weeks		Not recommended.	Cover tightly. Don't return leftover cream to original container. This may spread bacteria to remaining cream. Frozen cream may not whip. Use for cooking.
Cream				
Half and half, light, heavy	3-4 days		4 months	Refer to manufacturer's expiration guidance.
(ultra pasteurized, unopened)	1 months		Not recommended.	
Sour				
Dips (store bought)	2 weeks			
Ice cream, ice milk, sherbet			6 months	
Milk				Keep tightly covered. Don't return leftover milk to original container. This may spread bacteria to remaining milk. Frozen milk may undergo some quality change.
Fresh pasteurized and reconstituted nonfat dry milk	1 week (or a few days after sell by date)			
Evaporated or condensed				Invert can every 2 months. Cover tightly.
(unopened)		12 months		
(opened)	4-5 days			
Nonfat dry, not reconstituted				Refrigeration may prolong quality.
(unopened)		3-5 years		
(opened)		3 months		
Almond milk*	7-10 days			Cover tightly.
Rice milk**	7-10 days	Until open		
Coconut milk***	7-10 days			
Canned coconut milk	4 days (opened)	2-5 years	3 months	
Whipped topping				
In aerosol can	3 months		Not recommended.	
From prepared mix	2 weeks		14 months	

FOOD	REFRIGERATOR	PANTRY	FREEZER	SPECIAL HANDLING
Yogurt	1-2 weeks		1-2 months	Refer to manufacturer's expiration guidance.
Frozen			2 months	
Note: Thaw all frozen dairy products in refrigerator. Some products may lose emulsion and separate but are still adequate for cooking.				
Eggs				
Fresh				Store eggs in original carton in coldest part of refrigerator. Uncooked whites can be frozen as they are. To freeze uncooked yolks or whole eggs, add 1/8 teaspoon salt or 1 1/2 teaspoons corn syrup per 1/4 cup (4 yolks or 2 whole eggs). Thaw in refrigerator.
In shell	3-5 weeks		Not recommended.	
Whites	2-4 days		12 months	
Yolks (unbroken and covered with water)	2-4 days		12 months	
Hard cooked	1 week			
Deviled	2-3 days			
Leftover egg dishes	3-4 days		2-3 months	
Fish and shellfish: Refrigerator storage times are for optimal temperature of 32-38°F. Higher temperatures may decrease safe storage times.				
Fish				
Fatty fish				
mackerel, trout, salmon, etc.	1-2 days		2-3 months	For refrigerator, keep wrapped in original wrap. Store in coldest part of refrigerator (32-38°F). Package for freezer in moisture- and vapor-proof wrap.
Lean fish				
cod, flounder, etc.	1-2 days		6-8 months	Keep solidly frozen at 0°F. Thaw in refrigerator.
Breaded, frozen	Not recommended.		18 months	
Shellfish				
Clams				Refrigerate live clams, scallops, and oysters in container covered with clean, damp cloth—not airtight. Shells will gape naturally, but will close when tapped if alive. If not alive, discard.
shucked	3-10 days		3-4 months	
in shell	5-10 days			
Crab				
in shell	1-3 days		2-4 months	
meat (cooked)	3-5 days		4-10 months	
Crawfish				
in shell	1-3 days		6-18 months	
tail meat (cooked)	3-5 days		12-18 months	
Lobster				
in shell (live)	1 day		Not recommended.	
tail meat (cooked)	3-4 days		8 months	

FOOD	REFRIGERATOR	PANTRY	FREEZER	SPECIAL HANDLING
Oysters (shucked)	3-10 days		3-4 months	To freeze any uncooked shellfish, pack in moisture- and vapor- proof container. Freeze shucked product in its own “liquor” (liquid) to which water has been added to cover meat.
Shrimp (uncooked)	3-4 days		12-18 months	Remove heads and freeze shrimp tails in shell. Freeze in water in an airtight container of appropriate size for one meal.
Cooked fish or shellfish	3-4 days		1-2 months	
Canned fish or shellfish				Free from dents, rust, or swelling.
(unopened)		2-5 years		
(opened)	3-4 days			
Fruit				
Fresh				Do not wash fruit before storing—moisture encourages spoilage—but do wash before eating. Store in crisper or in moisture-resistant bags or wraps. Wrap cut fruits to prevent vitamin loss.
Apples	4-6 weeks	3 weeks	8 months	
Apricots, avocados, melons, nectarines, peaches, pears	2-5 days			
Bananas	3 days	3 days	2-3 months	
Berries, cherries	3-7 days		12 months	
Citrus fruit	1-3 weeks	10 days	Not recommended.	
Grapes, plums	7 days	1 day	1 months	
Pineapple, fresh	5-7 days	1-2 days	10-12 months	
Canned (all kinds and juices)				Keep tightly covered. Transfer canned fruit to glass or plastic container after opening.
(unopened)		12 months		
(opened)	1 week			
Juices				Keep tightly covered once open to prevent vitamin loss. Transfer canned juice to glass or plastic container after opening.
Fresh	2-3 days		2-3 weeks	
Canned (after opening)	5-7 days			
Frozen				
(concentrated)			12 months	
(reconstituted)	6 days			
Frozen				
(home frozen or purchased frozen)			12 months	Freeze in moisture- and vapor-proof container.
Dried	6 months	6 months		Keep cool in airtight container. If foods gain moisture, they may become unsafe and allow bacterial growth. Best if refrigerated after opening.

FOOD	REFRIGERATOR	PANTRY	FREEZER	SPECIAL HANDLING
Meats: Beef, pork, lamb, veal, and game.				
*Fresh, uncooked				Store in colder part of refrigerator (36–40°F). Freeze immediately if not planning to use in a day or two. Wrap in moisture- and vapor-proof wrap for freezing. Label with date and freeze rapidly at 0°F. Freezer storage times for veal may be less. Pork is best if used within 6 months after freezing. Actual storage time of meat depends on the freshness of meat when purchased. *Vacuum-packed fresh meats have a recommended storage time of 2 weeks in the refrigerator.
Chops	3-5 days		4–12 months	
Ground	1–2 days		3-4 months	
Roast	3-5 days		4–12 months	
Sausage	3-4 days		1–2 months	
Steaks	3-5 days		4-12 months	
Stew meat	3-5 days		4-12 months	
Variety meats	1-2 days		3-4 months	
Casseroles, TV dinners, stews	3-4 days		2–3 months	
Cooked meats (including leftovers)				
Cooked meat and meat dishes	3-4 days		2–3 months	
Gravy, broths	3-4 days		1–2 months	
Cured and smoked meats (including lunch meats)				Keep wrapped. Store in coldest part of refrigerator or in meat keeper. Freezing cured or smoked meats is generally not recommended because salty meats will rapidly turn rancid and lunch meats and hotdogs will weep. Freezing is possible, however, so limited freezer storage times are given. If meats are vacuum packaged, check manufacturer's date.
Bacon	5–7 days		1 month	
Ham (fully cooked)				
whole	5–7 days		1-2 months	
slices	3–4 days		1-2 months	
canned (unopened)	6–9 months			Do not freeze canned hams.
canned (shelf stable, unopened)		2 years		Refrigerate after opening.
country style (unsliced)		12 months		Refrigerate once sliced. Maximum refrigerator storage time is 1–2 months.
(cooked, sliced)	3-4 days		1 month	
Hotdogs				
(unopened)	2 weeks**		1–2 months	
(opened)	1 week			
Lunch meats				
(unopened)	2 weeks**		1–2 months	
(opened)	3–5 days			

FOOD	REFRIGERATOR	PANTRY	FREEZER	SPECIAL HANDLING
Sausage				
smoked links	1 week		1-2 months	Freezing alters sausage flavor. Leave frozen no more than 1 month.
dry and semi-dry (like salami)	2–3 weeks		1-2 months	
				**Unopened lunch meats and hotdogs should not be kept more than 1 week after sell by date.
Game birds	1-2 days		6–12 months	
Venison	3–5 days		4–12 months	
Poultry				
Chicken or turkey				Store in coldest part of refrigerator. Do not let raw juices drip onto other foods For freezing, use moisture- and vapor- proof wrap or container.
Fresh				
whole	1-2 days		12 months	
pieces	2-3 days		6–9 months	
giblets	1-2 days		3–4 months	
Cooked				
leftover pieces	3-4 days		4 months	
covered with broth, gravy	3-4 days		6 months	
Canned				
(unopened)		5 years		
(opened)	3-4 days			
Casseroles, TV dinners			3 months	
Duck, goose	1-2 days		6 months	
Staples				
Baking powder, soda		6-18 months unopened, 3-6 months opened		Keep dry and covered.
Bouillon cubes, granules		12 months		Keep dry and covered.
Catsup, chili sauce, barbecue sauce				Refrigerate after opening for longer storage time. Will keep for several months.
(unopened)		12 months		
Chocolate				Keep cool.
Syrup	6 months	2 years unopened		
Semi-sweet		12-24 months		
Unsweetened		12-24 months		
Chocolate syrup				
(unopened)		2 years		
(opened)	6 months			Cover tightly and refrigerate.

FOOD	REFRIGERATOR	PANTRY	FREEZER	SPECIAL HANDLING
Cocoa mixes		8 months		Cover tightly.
Coffee				
Whole beans	3-4 months	3-5 months		
Ground	1 month	2 years unopened	Not recommended.	
(opened)	4-6 weeks	2 weeks		
Instant				
(unopened)		1 years		
(opened)		2-3 months		Keep tightly closed to keep out moisture.
Coffee creamers				Keep tightly closed to keep out moisture.
Powdered (unopened)		2 years		
(opened)		2-3 months		
Cornstarch		18-24 months		Keep tightly covered.
Gelatin (all types)		10-12 months		
Honey		2 years		Cover tightly. If it crystallizes, warm the jar in pan of hot water or heat on low in microwave.
Jams, jellies		6-18 months		Cover tightly; refrigerate after opening to prolong storage.
Margarine	6 months		12 months	
Marshmallows		1 year unopened		Keep in airtight container.
Cream		2-5 months		Cover tightly. Refrigerate after opening.
Mayonnaise				Refrigerate after opening. Refrigerate to extend storage life.
(unopened)		3-6 months		
(opened)	3 months			
Molasses				Refrigerate to extend storage life. Refrigerate for best storage.
(unopened)		12-24 months		
(opened)		6 months		
Mustard, prepared yellow				Refrigerate for best storage.
(unopened)		1-2 years		Store in cool place away from heat source to prevent deterioration.
(opened)				
Oils				Store in cool place away from heat source to prevent deterioration.
(unopened)		6-12 months		
(opened)	4 months	3-5 months		

FOOD	REFRIGERATOR	PANTRY	FREEZER	SPECIAL HANDLING
Pectin				Look for expiration date.
Liquid		1 month		Recap and refrigerate.
Dry		1 month		
Peanut butter				Refrigeration prolongs storage time and helps prevent rancidity.
(unopened)	12 months	6–9 months		
(opened)	3-4 months	2–3 months		
Salad dressing				
Bottled (unopened)		10–12 months		
Bottled (opened)	1-3 months			
Made from mix	4 weeks			
Shortening		12-24 months		Store away from heat source to prevent rancidity.
Spices and herbs				Store in airtight containers in dry place away from heat or light. Replace if aroma fades. May be refrigerated or frozen for longer storage.
Whole spices		3-4 years		
Ground spices		2-3 years		
Herbs		1-2 years		
Sugar				For best storage, keep in airtight container.
Brown		18-24 months		
Confectioner's		18-24 months		
Granulated		18-24 months		
Sweetener, artificial		2 years		
Tea				Keep in airtight containers.
Bags		18-36 months		
Instant		2-3 years		
Loose		6-12 months		
Vanilla				Keep tightly closed; volatile oils escape.
(unopened)		2 years		
(opened)		12 months		
Other extracts (opened)		12 months		
Vinegar				Keep tightly closed. Distilled vinegar lasts longer than cider vinegar. Vinegar in glass containers has a longer storage time. If a cloudy mass develops in opened vinegar, do not use.
(unopened)		2 years		
(opened)		2 years		

FOOD	REFRIGERATOR	PANTRY	FREEZER	SPECIAL HANDLING
Vegetables: In general, keep in crisper or moisture-proof wrapping.				
Fresh				
Artichokes	1-2 weeks	1-2 days	Not recommended.	Refrigerate in plastic. Wrap base of stalks with damp cloth or paper towel.
Asparagus	3-4 days		5 months	Refrigerate in plastic. Wrap base of stalks with damp cloth or paper towel.
Beans				
dried		12-24 months		
green or waxed	3-5 days		8 months	Do not wash green beans until just before use.
lima (unshelled)	3-5 days		8 months	
Beets	1-2 weeks	1 day	6-8 months	Remove leafy tops. Keep in crisper.
Broccoli	3-5 days		10-12 months	
Brussels sprouts	3-5 days		10-12 months	
Cabbage	1-2 weeks		10-12 months	
Carrots, parsnips	2-3 weeks		10-12 months	
Celery	1-2 weeks		10-12 months	Celery may keep longer if wrapped with a moist towel.
Corn (in husks)	1-2 days		8 months	
Cucumbers	4-6 days		Not recommended.	
Eggplant	4-7 days	1 day	6-8 months	
Garlic	3-14 days	1 month	1 month	
Greens, spinach, leafy greens, etc.	3-5 days		Not recommended.	Keep in cool, dry, ventilated area. Rinse and drain greens before refrigerating. Do not allow to freeze.
Lettuce, iceberg	1-2 weeks		Not recommended.	
Mushrooms	3-7 days		10-12 months	Do not wash mushrooms before refrigerating. Do not store in airtight container.
Onions	2 months	1 month	10-12 months	Store at room temperature in cool, ventilated area.
dry		2-4 weeks		Keep dry.
green	1 week		10-12 months	Keep refrigerated in plastic bag.
Parsley	2-3 days		3-4 months	Store with stems in water and covered plastic wrap.
Peas (unshelled)	3-5 days		8 months	
Peppers	4-14 days		6-8 months	
Chile	1 week		12 months	Keep chile peppers refrigerated in paper bag.

FOOD	REFRIGERATOR	PANTRY	FREEZER	SPECIAL HANDLING
Potatoes	1-2 weeks	1 week		Keep fresh potatoes dry and away from sun. For longer storage, keep at 50–60°F. Warmer temperatures encourage sprouting. Don't refrigerate fresh potatoes.
white, instant (unopened)				
Radishes	1–2 weeks	1-5 days		
Rhubarb	3-7 days	2-6 weeks		
Rutabagas	2-3 weeks	Until ripe, then 7 days	8-10 months	
Squash				
summer varieties	4-5 days		10-12 months	Summer varieties of squash include zucchini and yellow crookneck.
winter varieties	1-3 months		10-12 months	Winter or hard-shelled squash include pumpkin, acorn, spaghetti, and butternut squash.
Tomatoes, ripe			8-12 months	
Turnips	2 weeks		8-10 months	Do not refrigerate until ripe.
Canned				
All kinds		12 months		
Dried				Keep all dried vegetables cool and dry in airtight container. Refrigerate for up to 12 months. If moisture is present, foods may become unsafe because moisture allows bacterial growth.
Frozen				
Commercially frozen			8 months	
Home frozen			12 months	
Miscellaneous: Snacks, condiments, mixes, prepared foods, etc.				
Baby food				
Jars or pouches (opened)	2-3 days			Do not serve directly out of the jar.
Dry cereal (opened)		1 month		
Cakes, store bought		1–2 days		If cake contains butter, cream, whipped cream, or custard frosting or filling, refrigerate.
Angel food			2 months	
Chiffon sponge			2 months	
Cheese			2–3 months	
Chocolate			4 months	
Fruitcake			12 months	
Yellow pound			6 months	
Frosted			8–12 months	
Home frozen			3 months	
Cake, cookie mixes		12-18 months		

FOOD	REFRIGERATOR	PANTRY	FREEZER	SPECIAL HANDLING
Canned goods				
(miscellaneous, unopened)		12 months		
Cookies				
(store bought, unopened)		2-6 months	8-12 months	
Crackers	3-4 months	8 months	3-4 months	
Metered calorie products				
Instant Breakfast, Boost, etc.		6 months		Keep in can, closed jars, or in original packets.
Nuts				
In shell (unopened)	4 weeks	Use by date		Freeze for longer life.
Nut meats, packaged (unopened)		12 months	6-12 months	
Pine nuts	3 months	2-3 weeks	9 months	
Pickles, olives				Refrigerate once opened for 2–3 months.
(canned, opened)	1-3 months			
(canned, unopened)		12-18 months		
Pies and pastries		2–3 days		Those with whipped cream, custard, or chiffon fillings should be refrigerated.
Fruit				
Baked	1 week	1-2 days	1–2 months	
Unbaked			8 months	
Popcorn (unpopped)		2 years		Store in airtight container.
Pudding mixes		12 months		
Sauces, condiments, etc. (store bought)				
Hot sauce, Worcestershire, etc.		1 year		Refrigeration recommended.
Salsa				Fresh homemade salsa has a shorter refrigerator storage time depending upon ingredients (5–7 days). Homemade canned products have a shelf life of up to 9-12 months, unopened, if adequately processed.
(unopened)		12 months		
(opened)	1–2 months			
<p>*Blue Diamond Growers. (2019). <i>Frequently asked questions</i>. https://www.bluediamond.com/faqs</p> <p>**Pacific Foods of Oregon. (2019). <i>Ask away. We're here to help</i>. https://www.pacificfoods.com/faqs/</p> <p>***Vita Coco. (2019). <i>Frequently asked questions</i>. https://vitacoco.com/pages/faq</p>				

Original author: Alice Jane Handley, Extension food and nutrition specialist.



Amber Benson is an Assistant Professor at New Mexico State University and serves with Bernalillo County Cooperative Extension Service as the Family and Consumer Sciences Agent. She is passionate about building safer food communities. She serves New Mexico through a variety of food safety education including food preservation and cooking for home consumers as well as food safety and small business education for food entrepreneurs. Amber earned her B.A. and M.S. degrees in business and studied Food Science at NMSU.



Dianne Christensen is an Associate Professor at New Mexico State University and serves with Bernalillo County Cooperative Extension Service as the Family and Consumer Sciences Agent. She is passionate about wellness and assisting others to discover ways to craft healthy lifestyles that work in their unique lives. She serves on the national board for the National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences. Locally, she serves on the board for the New Mexico Diabetes Advisory Council and sits on the Health Advisory Council for Roadrunner Food Bank.

Contents of publications may be freely reproduced, with an appropriate citation, for educational purposes. All other rights reserved. For permission to use publications for other purposes, contact pubs@nmsu.edu or the authors listed on the publication. New Mexico State University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer and educator. NMSU and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.