

Club House Rules: Warehouse Shoppers Need To “Bulk Up” On Home Food Safety

(NAPSA)—When the first warehouse clubs hit the streets more than 20 years ago, consumers were baffled by the new phenomenon of bulk buying. Who wants five pounds of bacon and how long can you store it? Today, club stores have become a mainstay in the retail landscape, and for many a weekly ritual; yet still, many shoppers are perplexed.

According to a new survey by the American Dietetic Association and the ConAgra Foods Foundation, more than half of all Americans (53 percent) shop warehouse stores for groceries more often today than they did just one year ago. While many say it's the value that keeps them coming back, more than half simply like stocking up on food. But properly storing and preparing bulk foods is a big concern among these shoppers, with two out of three asking for advice.

“Consumers have embraced bulk-mania,” says registered dietitian Jackie Newgent, national spokesperson for the ADA/ConAgra Foods Home Food Safety... *It's in Your Hands*™ program. “Yet, shopping these superstores for everything from home electronics to ice cream and storing groceries for months at a time can be confusing and present food safety concerns.”

Maximize your warehouse experience and supersize your safety by following these guidelines from the American Dietetic Association and the ConAgra Foods Foundation.

Plan Your Attack

A majority of warehouse shoppers (61 percent) head for the food aisles first on a typical club store shopping trip. Half of these trips last as long as one to two hours, including stops for clothes, electronics, office supplies and furnishings. Run a few additional errands or hit traffic on the way



home, and consumers could find themselves unpacking spoiled food.

“Shoppers need to be mindful of the two-hour rule: Perishable food purchases should never sit at room temperature for more than two hours, at which point, if harmful bacteria are present, they begin to multiply rapidly,” advises Newgent.

Because warehouse stores have not yet found their way onto every street corner, these trips take time and should be scheduled. Plan accordingly, shopping the perishable food aisles last. And if you expect your afternoon errands to last more than two hours, bring along a cooler filled with ice or an insulated sack to keep perishable foods properly chilled.

Learn the Cold Truth

Survey results show more than half of all club store shoppers (54 percent) own a second refrigerator or freezer for storing bulk foods. Yet, most may have their appliances set at the wrong temperatures. A whopping 71 percent of Americans are unaware of the proper temperature settings for their refrigerators—and 86 percent don't know how to set the proper temperature for their freezers.

Freezers should be set at or below 0 degrees Fahrenheit and refrigerators should be set below 40 degrees Fahrenheit. Keep track by placing a simple refrigerator thermometer in each appliance and adjust accordingly.

A Meaty Matter

More than nine out of 10 club store shoppers typically purchase fresh/frozen meat, poultry or seafood, and 78 percent stock up on lunch meat, bacon, sausage and hot dogs. While stocking up on these staple foods might make sense, it does require proper storage practices—which many people don't follow.

Most people store fresh/frozen meat, poultry and seafood in their freezers, keeping other meat products, such as lunch meat, bacon, sausage, and hot dogs stored in refrigerators only. Yet these other meats can be stored in freezers as well to extend shelf life.

“When stored in a refrigerator, for instance, a sealed package of hot dogs will last two weeks, one week if opened. Stored in the freezer, a time limit of one or two months is recommended for best quality,” advises Newgent.

Know When to Say When

Survey results show nearly half of all bulk food shoppers store their perishables for three weeks or longer—with 25 percent keeping perishable food items for more than a month. And when it comes to deciding when foods should go, more than 60 percent rely on their senses—tasting, smelling or seeing, to determine if food has spoiled versus checking the expiration date.

Food and nutrition experts agree: Paying attention to the expiration information on food packages is your best line of defense, unless, once again, you choose to extend shelf life by freezing.

More Help for Club Store Shoppers

For more help navigating the “do's” and “don'ts” of warehouse club store shopping, download a free copy of the Food Storage Chart, available from the ADA/ConAgra Foods Web site at www.homefoodsafety.org.