

Food Facts

Make A Clean Sweep Of Food Storage Areas

(NAPSA)—If you're like most people, you've occasionally taken something out of the freezer and wondered, "What is this icy blob?" You may also have thought about whether the frozen meat you tossed in the back of the freezer is still safe or if you can eat outdated canned chili or slimy bologna.

If you've had any of these items in your food storage areas—or even if you haven't—it may be time for cleaning the food storage areas of your kitchen. In these challenging economic times, you don't want to waste food, but if it's not safe, you don't want to chance getting a food-borne illness either.

Is Frozen Food Safe?

Yes. Once food is frozen, bacteria can't grow, so food continuously kept frozen is always safe. However, it may not look like something you'd want to eat. When cleaning out the freezer, have a "mystery meal" by thawing the unrecognizable packages. They will look like real food after thawing, so diners can take their pick, heat and eat.

Freezer burn? It's not a sign that food is dangerous—only that it has dried in spots. Merely cut off the freezer-burned areas of the meat and use the rest.

Do Refrigerated Foods Have A Shelf Life?

Yes again. Unlike their frozen counterparts, refrigerated foods will eventually spoil. After cleaning out the refrigerator, it's helpful to use a felt-tip pen and mark the date you are adding new foods to the refrigerator. It is also helpful to identify and date new foods in the freezer. To see a food storage time chart, go to www.fsis.usda.gov and click on



Don't let food spoil. When you refrigerate or freeze leftovers, mark the date on the package with a felt-tip pen so you know how long you can store it.

"Fact Sheets." There, you will find Basics for Handling Food Safely.

Make A Date

Some canned goods are dated by the manufacturer and some are not. A general rule is that low-acid canned goods, such as green beans, stew and soups, are good for five years after you purchase them, whereas acidic foods such as canned tomatoes, pineapple and mandarin oranges should be used within 18 to 24 months.

Again, it's always a good practice to date the cans before storing them in the pantry so you know for sure when they should be used.

For more food safety information about meat, poultry or egg products, call the USDA.

Meat and Poultry Hotline at (888) MPHOTline or (888) 674-6854; in English and Spanish, type a question into "Ask Karen" (www.AskKaren.gov); go to www.fsis.usda.gov; or go to befood.safe.gov.