



Home Food Preservation



Storing Frozen Meat, Fish and Poultry

Freezing meat reduces the temperature so microbes that cause foodborne illnesses and spoilage cannot grow. Many microbes survive freezing, proper defrosting and cooking food until it reaches a safe temperature is always necessary. Frozen food can be safely stored indefinitely, but over time quality will eventually decline. Food quality can be extended by storing in a freezer that consistently maintains 0°F or lower and packaging the food properly for frozen storage.

Safety and Quality



- Freezing preserves food by preventing the growth of microbes that cause spoilage and food-borne illness. Freezing makes water unavailable, microbes cannot use water that has formed into ice crystals. Freezing does not kill most microbes, so food must be handled safely before it is frozen and after it is defrosted.
- Off-flavors caused by rancidity can occur when fat in the food is exposed to oxygen. This can be avoided by reducing the oxygen that comes into contact with the food as much as possible. Freezer-burn which is caused by moisture loss can be avoided by using moisture resistant wrap such as freezer paper.
- Most foods last well for 6-9 months or up to a year if keep frozen solid at 0°F or below.

Freezing Tips

- Freeze or store frozen meat, fish or poultry promptly
- Always work with clean hands
- Make sure preparation areas, equipment and utensils are clean
- Choose containers appropriate for freezing: Freezer foil, wrap or bags, plastic freezing containers
- When packaging food wrap tightly pressing out as much oxygen as possible.

Storage Times at 0°F

Food	Time
Meat - beef, lamb, pork	Ground 3 - 4 months
	Roasts 4 - 12 months
	Steaks 6 - 12 months
	Cooked 2 - 3 months
Poultry - chicken, turkey, duck, goose	Cut up 9 months
	Whole 12 months
	Cooked 4 - 6 months
Fish and shellfish	Lean 4 - 8 months
	Fatty 2 - 3 months
	Cooked 3 months
	Shellfish/raw 2 - 3 months
	Shellfish/cooked 1 - 3 months