



FOOD SHOPPING SAFETY TIPS

Before heading to the grocery store or even the local farmers' market, clean your kitchen and organize your food storage areas to make sure you have enough room for new food. Checking your food stock to see what items you are low on and what you truly need to purchase will help reduce food waste and save you money. When you make your next food shopping trip, keep these food safety tips in mind.

WHILE SHOPPING

- Select good quality produce that is free of blemishes such as cracks or bruises where bacteria can harbor.
- Inspect canned items for any dents, rust or bulges on the top or side seam of the cans. This could be a sign of a harmful toxin, produced by *Clostridium botulinum*.
- Locate and understand food label dates, so you can be sure to purchase food of good quality.
- Use separate plastic bags when buying raw meat from the meat department and keep it away from your ready-to-eat foods in the grocery cart.
- Grab refrigerated and frozen foods last when you are shopping to keep foods cold longer.

TRAVELING HOME

- While running errands, plan for food shopping to be the last stop.
- Bacteria that can make you sick grow the fastest when food is between 41°F - 135°F. This is called the temperature danger zone.
 - After food shopping, minimize how long perishable food is in the temperature danger zone by refrigerating or freezing foods quickly
- If you are using public transportation or have a long ride home, bring a cooler bag with you and store cold foods together on your travel home.
 - You can use ice, ice packs or freeze water bottles to extend how long perishable food stays cold.

UNDERSTANDING FOOD LABEL DATES

Most dates provided by manufacturers on packages of food are an indication of when the quality of the item will start to decline. In the majority of cases, foods will remain safe past the date given—except for infant formula and deli meat opened past 7 days. Product labeling is generally not federally required, with the exception of infant formula due to loss of nutrients and minerals.

- **Sell-by:** How long the food product can be on display at the grocery store.
- **Use-by:** Date recommended for using the food product for the best quality
- **Best if used by/before:** How long the food product will remain best quality