

### Safe Food Handling



The following is a list of conditions that can help you check the safety and ensure the quality and freshness of a food product, and could indicate a food item is not safe to eat. If an item gets even one ✓ it's best not to put it in your shopping basket or on your dinner table. Do not purchase any food item that has a dirty container, missing label, damaged or missing tamper-resistant seal, or is past the expiration date.

#### Food in Bottles or Jars

- \_\_\_ Home-canned (from an unknown source)
- \_\_\_ Crooked or loose lid
- \_\_\_ "Popped" vacuum seal button on lid
- \_\_\_ Cracked or chipped glass
- \_\_\_ Dirt under the rim
- \_\_\_ Damaged or missing tamper-resistant seal

#### Food in Cans

- \_\_\_ Buckled or pinched tops and bottoms
- \_\_\_ Rust that can't be rubbed off or makes holes in can
- \_\_\_ Swollen or bulging ends
- \_\_\_ Holes or sharp dents
- \_\_\_ Leaking (or looks like it has leaked)
- \_\_\_ Crushed under the rim at either end
- \_\_\_ Ends that give or flip and bulge on the other end when pushed

#### Food in Cardboard (cereal and pasta)

- \_\_\_ Signs of insects  
(chewed areas, holes, droppings)
- \_\_\_ Torn or missing inner packaging

#### Refrigerated Foods

- \_\_\_ Warm (not refrigerator temperature)
- \_\_\_ "Off" odor, mold, odd appearance (spoilage)

#### Frozen Foods

- \_\_\_ Evidence of thawing  
(peas stuck together in a lump)
- \_\_\_ Leaking bags or containers  
(temperature too warm)

#### Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

- \_\_\_ Bruises
- \_\_\_ Too soft

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#### CULTIVATING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

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COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND LIFE SCIENCES

# Selecting, Handling, and Storing Your Food

## Check the dates on foods

- ⌚ A "**Sell-By**" date tells the store how long to display the product for sale. It is not a safety date.
- ⌚ A "**Best if Used By (or Before)**" date is recommended for best flavor or quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.
- ⌚ A "**Use-By**" date is the last date recommended for the use of the product while at peak quality, as determined by the manufacturer of the product. It is not a purchase or safety date except for when used on infant formula.
- ⌚ A "**Freeze-By**" date indicates when a product should be frozen to maintain peak quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.



## Facts about transporting and storing your food

- ❄ Take food straight home after grocery shopping.
- ❄ Use coolers or insulated bags if travel time from store to home is longer than one hour or if the temperature is above 40 degrees Fahrenheit.
- ❄ When you get home, immediately refrigerate or freeze perishable items. Put new items in the back to use older items first.
- ❄ Check the temperature of your refrigerator and freezer before you put your groceries away. The refrigerator temperature should be 40 ° F or lower and the freezer should be 0 ° F or lower.

## Where to store fresh foods



- 🥬 Store fresh fruits and vegetables in the crisper drawer in the refrigerator. It is designed to keep them moist.
- 🥬 Most vegetables are best kept in the refrigerator. Exceptions include potatoes, onions, winter squashes, eggplant, tomatoes (unless cut) and garlic, which should be stored in a cool dry place.
- 🥚 Store eggs in their original carton in the main part of the refrigerator and not on the inside of the door.
- 🥩 Fresh meat, cold cuts and cheese should be stored in the coldest part of the refrigerator which is usually on the bottom shelf. Store raw meats separately so juices do not come in contact with ready-to-eat foods.
- 🥛 All dairy foods should be stored in the refrigerator. Milk should not be placed in the door.