

What Food is Still Good?

Remember the general rule: When in doubt, throw it out!

Once the storm has passed and/or the power has been restored, go through your refrigerator and freezer and discard food that was not kept cold enough. The key to determining which food is safe to eat is knowing the temperature at which the food has been kept. The refrigerator should be 40 degrees Fahrenheit or below. You can also use your food product thermometer to check individual food items.

Generally, food in the refrigerator will remain cold for four to six hours if the door isn't opened. A full freezer will stay frozen for two days; a half-full freezer for about one day.

Keep, Eat, or Refreeze

Despite your best efforts, the food in your freezer may partially or completely thaw before power is restored. Foods may be safely cooked and eaten or refrozen if they still contain ice crystals.

Foods that have completely thawed, but are still cold and have been kept cold for no longer than one or two days after thawing, may be eaten or refrozen if the following conditions are met:

Fruits may be eaten or refrozen if they still taste and smell good. Fruits beginning to ferment are not dangerous to eat but will have an off-taste.

Vegetables should not be eaten or refrozen if thawed completely, since bacteria multiply rapidly in these foods. If ice crystals are present, eating or refreezing is possible.

Meat and poultry should be discarded if the color or odor is poor or questionable or if the meat has been warmer than 40 degrees Fahrenheit for two hours. Unspoiled meat may be cooked and then eaten or refrozen.

Fish and shellfish should not be eaten or refrozen if thawed completely since these foods are extremely perishable. You may eat or refreeze if ice crystals are present.

Frozen dinners should be kept refrigerated and cooked as soon as possible.

Ice cream should be discarded.

Do Not Eat ... Discard!

Throw away moldy items or food with an unusual odor or appearance. Throw away the following foods if they have been above 40 degrees Fahrenheit for over two hours:

- Raw or cooked meat, poultry, seafood
- Meat-topped pizza, lunchmeats
- Casseroles, stews, soups
- Milk/cream, yogurt, soft cheese
- Mayonnaise, tartar sauce, creamy dressings
- Cooked pasta, potato, rice, salads prepared from these foods

- Refrigerator and cookie doughs
- Fresh eggs, egg substitutes
- Cream-filled pastries
- Custard, chiffon, cheese pies
- Gravies

Foods Okay to Keep

There are foods that some people store in the refrigerator that also can be kept at room temperature for a few days. If you have any of the foods listed below stored in your refrigerator and the temperature in your refrigerator rises above 40 degrees Fahrenheit, these foods should be safe.

- Butter, margarine
- Hard cheese
- Fresh fruit and vegetables (except fresh sliced fruit and raw sprouts)
- Fruit juices
- Dried fruits, coconut
- Fresh herbs and spices
- Opened jars of vinegar-based salad dressing, peanut butter, jelly, relish, taco sauce, barbecue sauce
- Mustard, ketchup, olives
- Fruit pies

These pages are from the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) booklet *Don't Be Left in the Dark* (November 2003) which contains additional emergency sanitation and safety information. This 32-page booklet is available by calling 1-800-458-1158, extension 27530.