# Food Safety During Power Outage

## Refrigerated Food and Power Outages: When to Save It and When to Throw It Out

As the USDA notes in Keeping Food Safe During an Emergency, your refrigerator will keep food safe for up to 4 hours during a power outage. Keep the door closed as much as possible. Discard refrigerated perishable food such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and leftovers after 4 hours without power.

After a power outage **never** taste food to determine its safety. You will have to evaluate each item separately—use this chart as a guide. **When in Doubt, Throw it Out!**

| Type of Food | Exposed to temperatures of 40°F (4°C) or above for more than 2 hours |
|---|---|
| Meat, poultry, seafood | |
| Raw or leftover cooked meat, poultry, fish, or seafood; soy meat substitutes | Discard |
| Thawing meat or poultry | Discard |
| Salads: Meat, tuna, shrimp, chicken, or egg salad | Discard |
| Gravy, stuffing, broth | Discard |
| Lunchmeats, hot dogs, bacon, sausage, dried beef | Discard |
| Pizza with any topping | Discard |
| Canned hams labeled "Keep Refrigerated" | Discard |
| Canned meats and fish, opened | Discard |
| Casseroles, soups, stews | Discard |
| Cheese | |
| Soft cheeses: blue/bleu, Roquefort, Brie, Camembert, cottage, cream, Edam, Monterey Jack, ricotta, mozzarella, Muenster, Neufchatel, queso blanco, queso fresco | Discard |
| Hard cheeses: Cheddar, Colby, Swiss, Parmesan, provolone, Romano | Keep |
| Processed cheeses | Keep |
| Shredded cheeses | Discard |
| Low-fat cheeses | Discard |
| Grated Parmesan, Romano, or combination (in can or jar) | Keep |

| Type of Food | Exposed to temperatures of 40°F (4°C) or above for more than 2 hours |
|---|---|
| Dairy | |
| Milk, cream, sour cream, buttermilk, evaporated milk, yogurt, eggnog, soy milk | Discard |
| Butter, margarine | Keep |
| Baby formula, opened | Discard |
| Eggs | |
| Fresh shell eggs, eggs hard-cooked in shell, egg dishes, egg products | Discard |
| Custards and puddings, quiche | Discard |
| Fruits | |
| Fresh fruits, cut | Discard |
| Fresh fruits, uncut | Keep |
| Fruit juices, opened | Keep |
| Canned fruits, opened | Keep |
| Dried fruits, raisins, candied fruits, dates | Keep |
| Sliced or shredded coconut | Discard |
| Sauces, Spreads, Jams | |
| Opened mayonnaise, tartar sauce, horseradish | Discard (if above 50°F (10°C) for more than 8 hrs) |
| Peanut butter | Keep |
| Jelly, relish, taco sauce, mustard, catsup, olives, pickles | Keep |
| Worcestershire, soy, barbecue, hoisin sauces | Keep |
| Fish sauces, oyster sauce | Discard |
| Opened vinegar-based dressings | Keep |
| Opened creamy-based dressings | Discard |
| Spaghetti sauce, opened | Discard |
| Bread, cakes, cookies, pasta, grains | |
| Bread, rolls, cakes, muffins, quick breads, tortillas | Keep |
| Refrigerator biscuits, rolls, cookie dough | Discard |
| Cooked pasta, rice, potatoes | Discard |
| Pasta salads with mayonnaise or vinaigrette | Discard |
| Fresh pasta | Discard |
| Cheesecake | Discard |
| Breakfast foods: waffles, pancakes, bagels | Keep |
| Pies and pastry | |
| Cream filled pastries | Discard |
| Pies: Any with filling containing eggs or milk, e.g., custard, cheese-filled, or chiffon; quiche. | Discard |
| Fruit pies | Keep |
| Vegetables | |
| Fresh vegetables, cut | Discard |
| Fresh vegetables, uncut | Keep |
| Fresh mushrooms, herbs, spices | Keep |
| Greens, pre-cut, pre-washed, packaged | Discard |
| Vegetables, cooked | Discard |
| Tofu, cooked | Discard |
| Vegetable juice, opened | Discard |

| Type of Food | Exposed to temperatures of 40°F (4°C) or above for more than 2 hours |
|---|---|
| Baked potatoes | Discard |
| Commercial garlic in oil | Discard |
| Potato salad | Discard |
| Casseroles, soups, stews | Discard |

## Frozen Food and Power Outages: When to Save It and When to Throw It Out

A full freezer will hold a safe temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full and the door remains closed). Food may be safely refrozen if it still contains ice crystals or is at 40°F (4°C) or below, however, its quality may suffer. **Never** taste food to determine its safety. Use this chart as a general guide.

| Type of food | Contains ice crystals and feels cold as if refrigerated | Exposed to temperatures of 40°F (4°C) or above for more than 2 hours |
|---|---|---|
| Meat, poultry, seafood | | |
| Meat, poultry, seafood – all types of cuts | Refreeze | Discard |
| stews, soups | Refreeze | Discard |
| Dairy | | |
| Milk | Refreeze (some loss of texture) | Discard |
| Eggs (out of shell) and egg products | Refreeze | Discard |
| Ice cream, frozen yogurt | Discard | Discard |
| Cheese (soft and semi-soft) | Refreeze (some loss of texture) | Discard |
| Hard cheeses | Refreeze | Refreeze |
| Shredded cheeses | Refreeze | Discard |
| Cheesecake | Refreeze | Discard |
| Fruits | | |
| Juices | Refreeze | Refreeze (discard if mold, yeasty smell, or sliminess develops) |
| Home or commercially packaged | Refreeze (will change texture and flavor) | Refreeze (discard if mold, yeasty smell, or sliminess develops) |
| Vegetables | | |
| Juices | Refreeze | Discard after held above 40°F (4°C) for 6 hours |
| Home or commercially packaged or blanched | Refreeze (may suffer texture and flavor loss) | Discard after held above 40°F (4°C) for 6 hours |
| Breads and pastries | | |
| Breads, rolls, muffins, cakes (without custard fillings) | Refreeze | Refreeze |
| Cakes, pies, pastries with custard or cheese filling | Refreeze | Discard |
| Pie crusts, commercial and homemade bread dough | Refreeze (some quality loss may occur) | Refreeze (quality loss is considerable) |

| Type of food | Contains ice crystals and feels cold as if refrigerated | Exposed to temperatures of 40°F (4°C) or above for more than 2 hours |
|---|---|---|
| Other Foods | | |
| Casseroles: pasta, rice-based | Refreeze | Discard |
| Flour, cornmeal, nuts | Refreeze | Refreeze |
| Breakfast items: waffles, pancakes, bagels | Refreeze | Refreeze |
| Frozen meal, entree, specialty item (pizza, sausage and biscuit, meat pie, convenience foods) | Refreeze | Discard |

Date Last Reviewed

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