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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