

CONSUMING NEWS

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The ULTIMATE Food Storage Guide

By Cheryl Bell, MS, RD, LDN, CHE

Use this guide to determine what's perfectly fine and what's petrified when you finally get around to dusting the cobwebs out of your pantry and wiping those mystery spills from your fridge!

CUPBOARD & PANTRY

- Baking Powder & Soda **18 Months-2 Years**
- Barley, Dried Beans, Lentils **12 Months**
- Breakfast Products – Instant Varieties, Pancake Mix **6 Months**
- Cake Mixes **6-12 Months** (Angel Food 12 Months), Pie Crusts **6 Months**
- Canned Goods Low Acid - Beans, Carrots, Corn, Fish, Gravy, Meat, Poultry, Pasta, Peas, Potatoes, Stew, Soups, Spinach **2-5 Years**
- Canned Goods High Acid - Fruit, Juices, Pickles, Sauerkraut, Tomatoes, Soups, Vinegar-based Sauces **12-18 Months**
- Chocolate, Semi-sweet & Unsweetened **12-18 Months**
- Coconut, Shredded, Canned or Packaged **12 Months** unopened
- Condiments Unopened - Mayonnaise **2-3 Months**, Salad Dressing **10-12 Months**, Barbecue Sauce, Catsup, Chili & Cocktail Sauce, Chutney, Horseradish, Mustard, Picante Sauce, Pickles, Salsa, Taco Sauce **12 Months**
- Cookies, Packaged **2 Months**
- Crackers **8 Months**
- Gravy & Sauce Mixes **6-12 Months** in cool, dry place
- Flour, All-Purpose White **6-8 Months**
- Herbs **1-2 Years** (NEVER store over stove)
- Milk - Condensed & Evaporated Milk **12 Months** unopened, Non-fat Dry **6 Months** unopened, 3 **Months** opened
- Molasses **2 Years**
- Olives, Black & Green **12-18 Months**
- Pasta **2 Years**
- Rice – Brown 1 Year, Mixes **6 Months**, White & Wild **2 Years**
- Salad Oils **6 Months** unopened, **1-3 Months** opened
- Spices – Ground **2-3 Years**, Whole **2-4 Years** (store like dried herbs) *Note: Chili Powder, Paprika & Red Pepper are best if stored in fridge; listing below.*
- Sugars - Brown **4 Months**, Confectioners **18 Months**, Granulated **2 Years+**
- Sweeteners **2 Years+**
- Tea - Bags **18 Months**, Instant **2 Years**
- Vanilla **2 Years** unopened, **1 Year** opened
- Vinegar **2 Years**

REFRIGERATOR

- Coconut, Opened **6 Months**
- Condiments Opened - Barbecue Sauce, Catsup, Chili & Cocktail Sauce, Chutney, Horseradish, Mustard, Picante Sauce, Pickles, Taco Sauce, Salsa **12 Months**, Mayonnaise **2 Months**, Salad Dressing **3 Months**, all varieties
- Eggs, Use by Carton Date (Store in cold part of the

refrigerator, not door)

- Flour, Whole Wheat **6-8 Months**
- Fruit - Apricots, Avocados, Berries, Kiwi, Mango, Melons, Nectarines, Papaya, Peaches, Pineapple, Plums **3-5 Days**, Citrus, Grapes **1 Week**, Apples **3-4 Weeks**
- Herbs, Fresh **7-10 Days**
- Leftovers - Non-Meat/Poultry Dishes, Pasta, Rice, Veggies, Soups **3-4 Days**
- Meat – Cooked **2-3 Days**, Fresh **3-5 Days**, Opened Bacon, Hot Dogs, Lunch Meats **3-5 Days**, Whole Ham and Smoked Sausage **1 Week**, Unopened Bacon, Bologna, Frankfurters, Lunch Meat, **2 Weeks**
- Poultry – Cooked **2-3 Days**, Fresh **3-5 Days**
- Olives, Opened Black & Green **12 Months**
- Seafood, Fresh Clams, Crab, Fish, Scallops, Shrimp **1-2 Days**, Opened Smoked Fish **3-5 Days**, Unopened **2 Weeks**
- Spices – Chili Powder, Paprika & Red Pepper **2 Years**
- Vegetables – Asparagus, Broccoli, Corn, Green Beans, Green Peas, Mushrooms, Summer Squash **3-5 Days**, Carrots, Cauliflower, Celery, Cucumbers, Eggplant, Lettuce, Onions **1-2 Weeks**, Sweet Potatoes, **2-3 Weeks**, White Potatoes **2-3 Months**

FREEZER

- Bagels & Breads, **2 Months**
- Dairy see packaging notes below
- Egg Substitutes **12 Months** or carton date
- Fruits & Fruit Juice Concentrate **12 Months**
- Ice Cream & Sherbert **2-4 Months**
- Leftovers: Non-Meat/Poultry Dishes, Pasta, Rice, Veggies, Soups **2-3 Months**
- Meats & Poultry – Cooked **2-3 Months**, Fresh **4-12 Months**
- Microwaveable Meals **2-3 Months**
- Pancakes & Waffles **2 Months**
- Seafood - Lobster Tails **3 Months**, Shrimp, Scallops, Crayfish, Squid, Clams, Mussels, Oysters, **3-6 Months**, Raw Fish **6 Months**, Breaded Fish **3 Months**
- Vegetables Home Cooked or Frozen **6-8 Months**

PACKAGING DATES

Best-If-Used-By / Freshness The last date the product can keep its best quality – meaning the item may lose some of its freshness and nutritional value after that. Commonly found on Bakery Goods and Packaged Cereals.

Expiration / Use-By The last date the food should be eaten or used. Found mostly on Refrigerated Dough and Yeast Products.

Pack Date A non-expiring date notating when the food was manufactured or processed and packaged. Most commonly used for foods that can be kept for a long time, like Canned Goods. Refer to listings above for timing.

Pull-By / Sell-By The last date the product should be sold – meaning when stored properly in the fridge,

these foods will stay fresh and safe for 2-3 days after the packaged date. This is the dating used on Milk, Cheese, and Meats.

RULES OF THUMB

Cupboard & Pantry Store *Cool – Dark – Dry & Air Tight*, always!

Refrigeration Your home refrigerator temperature should fall within 34 to 40°F; foods spoil rapidly above 40°F. You can check the temp by placing a refrigerator thermometer at different locations in the cabinet. If the temperature is above 40°F regulate the control to lower the temperatures and recheck your thermometer in 30 minutes. Clean your fridge regularly to cut down on food odors and remove spoiled foods immediately to prevent decay from spreading to other foods.

Produce Tips Most produce can benefit from a little added moisture if not stored for too long; too much moisture will eventually cause mold and other funky microorganisms to grow. Most of the time, water is the enemy of flavor, so drying foods properly is important for sauces or dressings to stick to the food and to avoid diluting seasonings.

Don't keep washed items for more than a couple of days, or make sure to dry them thoroughly immediately after washing unless they're going to be eaten or cooked right away. Gently dry delicate items with towels (cloth or paper) and use a salad spinner for leafy greens. For berries, herbs and greens, you can also dry by layering with strips of paper towels in a large bowl to absorb the moisture. Tougher herbs such as parsley can actually be placed in a dish towel and rung out to dry after chopping.

Raw fruits are safe at room temperature, but after ripening, will mold and rot quickly. For best quality, store ripe fruit in fridge as noted and eat, prepare or freeze when expiring. Bananas keep at room temperature for 2-5 days after ripening.

Freezer Shop the frozen food aisles last, immediately before you're ready to go to check out. Always, take foods directly home and place immediately in freezer.

Knowing how long foods last, keeping track of expiration dates and buying in smaller quantities helps prevent "gross encounters". And when all else fails, follow my #1 Rule of Thumb: If in doubt, throw it out!

meijer
healthy living

Dietitian, Chef & Meijer Healthy Living Advisor; Cheryl Bell, has been working in the field of nutrition and food education for more than 18 years. For menu ideas and recipes based on simple cooking techniques and strategies geared for hectic lifestyles, look for "Chef Cheryl" at meijerhealthyliving.com. -CWM

Online Votes Needed for Children's Hospital

Shriners Hospitals for Children - Chicago is in the running in an online contest among 21 other children's hospitals across seven states to receive "Fun Centers", courtesy of Colgate-Palmolive and the Starlight Starbright Children's Foundation. The mobile entertainment units will be provided to help seriously ill children and their families cope with the pain, fear and isolation of illness. The top ten hospitals with the most online votes will receive two Starlight Fun Centers.

At Shriners Hospitals, children up to the age of 18 with orthopedic conditions, burns, spinal cord injuries, cleft lips and palates are eligible for admission and receive all care in a family-centered environment at no charge – regardless of financial need. Help the Shriners help make hospitalization easier for these children and their families, by voting online as follows:

- Log onto: www.colgate.com.
- Scroll down to "Community Programs".
- Click on the Starlight Starbright link.
- Click on the Illinois State logo link.
- Select Shriners Hospitals for Children - Chicago.



Shriners Hospitals
for Children™

VOTE once a day, every day until March 31st. Please share the news of this contest with families and friends!

Photo: Jalen was born with Osteogenesis Imperfecta, or OI. This disease, also called "brittle bone disease," arises from a genetic defect in producing collagen in the bones. Collagen is the chemical that provides the rebar-like molecules that give structural integrity to bone cells. Kids with OI are often born with broken bones and activities as simple as sneezing can cause a fresh break. Jalen is one of the lucky kids — he's had "only" nine broken bones, three before age two but has needed rodding surgeries on both femurs. This past summer, he experienced a break while on vacation in Wisconsin. His parents secured an ambulance for the three hour ride to Shriners Hospital for care.

