

STORING FOOD

Storing food safely

Depending on the type of food, you will need to store it in the fridge, freezer or in containers you keep in cupboards or on shelves. When storing food, it is important to keep food safe so that it is still safe to eat or cook.

Storing food in the fridge

Some food needs to be kept in the fridge to help stop bacteria from growing on it, such as food with a 'use by' date, cooked food and ready-to-eat food such as desserts and cooked meats.

Make sure your fridge is cold enough

You need to make sure your fridge is cold enough or food poisoning bacteria will still be able to grow. Your fridge should be between 0°C and 5°C.

If you are not sure how the temperature setting or dial works on your fridge, you could use a fridge thermometer to check it is the right temperature.

To store food safely in the fridge:

- Keep the fridge door closed as much as possible
- Wait for food to cool down before you put it in the fridge
- Turn the temperature down to help keep it cold enough if the fridge is full

Keeping food in the fridge.

To help stop bacteria from growing:

- When the label says 'keep refrigerated', make sure you do keep the food in the fridge – if the food isn't labelled with any storage instructions and it's a type of food that goes off quickly, you should put it in the fridge and eat it within two days
- Some jars and bottles need to be kept in the fridge once they've been opened – check the label and follow storage instructions
- When you're preparing food, keep it out of the fridge for the shortest time possible, especially when the weather or the room is warm
- If you have made some food (such as a sandwich or a cold dish) and you're not going to serve it straight away, keep it in the fridge until you're ready to use it
- If you're making a buffet, leave the food in the fridge until crew are ready to eat – you shouldn't leave food out of the fridge for more than four hours
- Cool leftovers as quickly as possible (ideally within one to two hours) and then store them in the fridge – use any leftovers within two days, except for cooked rice, which you should use within one day to help avoid food poisoning

Storing meat

It is important to store meat safely to stop bacteria from spreading and to avoid food poisoning. You should:

- Store raw meat and poultry in clean, sealed containers on the bottom shelf of the fridge, so they can't touch or drip onto other food

- Follow any storage instructions on the label and don't eat meat after its 'use by' date
- When you have cooked meat and you're not going to use it straight away, cool it as quickly as possible and then put it in the fridge or freezer
- Keep cooked meat separate from raw meat

Keeping food in the freezer

You can keep food safely in the freezer for years as long as it stays frozen the whole time. Nevertheless, the taste and texture of food changes if it has frozen for too long, so you might well find that it is not very nice to eat.

You can check any instructions on food labels or in your Garrets Galley Management Guide (if you do not have this anymore, we can send you an electronic version) to see how long food should be frozen.

It is safe to freeze most raw or cooked foods providing you:

- Freeze it before the 'use by' date
- Follow any freezing or thawing instructions on the label
- Thaw it in the fridge so that it doesn't get too warm, or, if you plan on cooking it as soon as it's defrosted, you could defrost it in a microwave
- Try to use it within one to two days after it's been defrosted – it will go off in the same way as if it were fresh
- Cook food until it's hot all the way through to center of food (72 °C for 2 minutes)

When frozen meat and fish (and some other foods) thaw, lots of liquid can come out of them. If you are defrosting raw meat or fish, this liquid will spread bacteria to any food, plates or surfaces that it touches. Keep the meat and fish in a sealed container at the bottom of the fridge, so that it cannot touch or drip onto other foods.

Always clean plates, utensils, surfaces and hands thoroughly, after they have touched raw or thawing meat, to stop bacteria from spreading.

If you defrost raw meat or fish and then cook it thoroughly, you can freeze it again, but remember never reheat foods more than once.

Storing dry food in containers

Many types of food do not need to be kept in the fridge to keep them safe to eat, for example dry foods such as rice, pasta and flour, many types of drinks, tinned foods, and unopened jars. However, it is still important to take care how you store them.

To store dry food safely:

Dry food pertains to those foods not likely to support bacterial growth in their natural state; these foods include Flour, Sugar, Salt, Cereals, Rice & other grains, Dried Peas & Beans, Breads & Crackers, Oils & Shortenings.

- Keep open packets of food in its original packaging and place in a container or keep the product information label and stick this to outside of container and place food in sealed bags or containers with lids – this helps keep food fresh and stops anything falling into the food by accident including pests
- Don't store food or drinks near cleaning products or other chemicals
- Don't use old food containers to store cleaning chemicals, and don't store food in containers

- Only reuse undamaged plastic water bottles that you can clean
- Don't store food on the floor, because this can encourage pests
- Keep the storage area dry and not too warm
- Write on a sticky label and stick it to the outside of container, provide information on product decant date, Use-by date and container last cleaned date

Tin cans

When you open a can of food and you are not going to use all the food straight away, empty the food into a bowl, or another airtight container, and place it in the fridge.

Do not store food in an opened tin can, or re-use empty cans to cook or store food. This is because when a can has been opened and the food is open to the air, the tin from the can might transfer more quickly to the can's contents.

This advice does not apply to foods sold in cans that have re-sealable lids, such as golden syrup and cocoa, because these types of food do not react with the can.

Covering food with cling film

Cling film is useful for protecting food but, like many things, it needs to be used correctly.

Not every type of cling film is suitable for using with all foods. Check the description on the box to see what foods it can be used with.

There are three main points to remember when using cling film:

- Don't use cling film if it could melt into the food, such as in the oven or on pots and pans on the hob
- You can use cling film in the microwave (in line with the manufacturer's instructions), but make sure the cling film doesn't touch the food
- Cling film should only touch high-fat foods when the description on the box says the cling film is suitable. High-fat foods include some types of cheese, raw meats with a layer of fat, fried meats, pies and pastries, and cakes with butter icing or chocolate coatings

Covering food with kitchen foil

Kitchen foil, which is made from aluminum, can be useful for wrapping and covering foods. However, it is best not to use foil or containers made from aluminum to store foods that are highly acidic, such as:

- Tomatoes
- Rhubarb
- Cabbage
- Soft fruit

Aluminium can affect the taste of these foods.

Simple food storage labels are available to order from Garrets Supply network upon request.



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