



Tips for Long-Term Food Storage

Long-Term Food Storage: The Big 4

When storing food, think:

- Cool
- Dry
- Dark
- Rodent/Pest-proof

Keeping foods intended for long-term storage in a cool, dry, dark place, inaccessible to pests will help prolong shelf-life and better maintain quality.



It is important to be prepared for life's unexpected moments and emergencies. Having food in your home that stores well for long periods of time is a key part of planning ahead.

10 Tips for Storing Food

1. **Keep it cool.** Foods spoil faster in warm temperatures. To preserve the quality of non-refrigerated, non-frozen foods, 40-70 °F is a good temperature storage range.
2. **Keep it dry.** Mold and bacteria can grow in moist food, so store food in dry, non-humid places. Also, moisture can affect the packaging, making paper degrade and metal rust. Do not store food in moist or humid places, like under the sink or over the stove.
3. **Keep it dark.** Light exposure can deteriorate food quality and packaging. Metal (e.g. canned food) helps prevent light exposure. Store foods in a dark place, like a pantry.
4. **First in, first out.** Store older foods in the front of your food storage area, to help ensure you use them before newer foods. This way, you use food in a timely manner, enjoying it when it is still at peak quality.
5. **Avoid storing food on the floor.** Food on the floor is more accessible to moisture and pests.
6. **Quality versus safety.** As foods age, their quality can deteriorate. Factors such as texture, flavor, and color can be impacted, and the amount of vitamins can decrease. However, a decrease in quality does not always mean food is not safe. For instance, a commercially canned food can be eaten after the best-buy date. Be sure to check the can first to make sure it is not leaking or bulging.

7. **Check packaging before eating.** Look for signs of pests, moisture, mold, and damaged containers. Discard this food.
8. **Commercially canned food lasts longer.** Home canning is a great way to preserve food. However, home canned food should generally be enjoyed within 1-2 years. Commercially canned food is safe to eat for longer, even though quality may be affected.
9. **Cans should not freeze.** Freezing cans may result in seam failure and foodborne illness. If you are storing cans in a basement, make sure it does not get too cold. Dried foods are okay to freeze.
10. **Choose a variety of foods.** Select foods you enjoy from a variety of food groups. Some emergencies may result in no power or water. Have foods on hand that you can eat in these situations.

For more tips, check out the USDA [FoodKeeper App](#) and Utah State University Extension's [Food Storage](#) site.

Looking for Foods that Store Well?

Choose a variety of foods from the food groups. Consider some of the following:

Produce

- Canned and frozen
- Dried and freeze-dried

Grains

- Flour
- Dried pasta
- Cereal, crackers, pretzels, and rice cakes
- Dried grains and grain pouches

Protein

- Dried milk
- Canned fish and meat
- Jerkies and protein bars
- Beans (dried and canned)
- Frozen (e.g. meat, fish, plant-based protein)
- Whole nuts and seeds and nut butters

Beverages

- Water bottles
- Canned juices

Other

- Coffee and tea
- Salt, pepper, dried herbs and spices, baking soda and powder, sugar, honey

