

Keep food safe in an outage



Household Solar

What to keep, what to toss, and how to make your cold last longer.

4 hours

A closed refrigerator keeps food safe for up to 4 hours.

48 hours

A full, closed freezer holds a safe temperature. Half full: about 24 hours.

40°F

Toss perishables that sat at 40°F or warmer for more than 2 hours.

● Before the outage

- ☐ Put thermometers in the fridge and freezer
So you can check temperatures, not guess.
- ☐ Freeze containers of water and gel packs
They keep food cold longer.
- ☐ Group frozen food together; it stays cold longer
- ☐ Have a cooler ready
For fridge items if the outage runs past 4 hours.
- ☐ Know where to buy dry ice or block ice
- ☐ Stock food that needs no refrigeration or cooking

● During and after

- ☐ Keep the fridge and freezer doors closed
Every opening lets cold out.
- ☐ Write down the time the power went out
- ☐ After 4 hours, move milk, meat and leftovers to a cooler with ice
- ☐ Check each item's temperature when power returns
- ☐ Never taste food to decide if it's safe
Harmful bacteria don't always change the taste or smell.
- ☐ When in doubt, throw it out

● Frozen food

Food that still has ice crystals, or is at 40°F or below, can be safely refrozen, though the texture may suffer. Toss ice cream and frozen yogurt that has thawed. Hard cheese, bread, flour and nuts can be refrozen even after warming. Meat, poultry, seafood and frozen meals held above 40°F for more than 2 hours should be thrown out.

● Refrigerated food after more than 2 hours above 40°F

Throw out	OK to keep
Raw or cooked meat, poultry, fish and seafood	Hard cheeses (cheddar, Swiss, Parmesan) and processed cheese
Lunch meat, hot dogs, bacon, sausage	Butter and margarine
Milk, cream, sour cream, yogurt	Uncut fresh fruit and vegetables
Soft cheeses (brie, mozzarella, cottage, cream cheese), shredded and low-fat cheese	Opened fruit juices and canned fruit
Eggs and egg dishes, custards, puddings	Peanut butter, jelly, mustard, ketchup, pickles, olives
Cooked pasta, rice and potatoes	Soy, Worcestershire and barbecue sauces
Cut fruit, cut vegetables, bagged salad greens	Opened vinegar-based dressings
Casseroles, soups, stews, pizza	Bread, rolls, tortillas, bagels, waffles
Opened creamy dressings, opened spaghetti sauce	Fruit pies
Opened baby formula	
Opened mayonnaise and tartar sauce, if above 50°F for more than 8 hours	

Based on FoodSafety.gov and USDA guidance, "Food Safety During Power Outage" (last reviewed by the agency August 2024). This is a summary: check the full charts at [foodsafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov) for items not listed here.