

## WHICH FOOD TO KEEP AND WHICH TO THROW OUT AFTER A POWER OUTAGE OR FLOOD

After a power outage or flood, in order to prevent food poisoning, consumers must sort through the food in their refrigerators and freezers and carefully select what needs to go.

### Refrigerator

A **thermometer** is the only truly reliable tool for checking the temperature in your refrigerator. The reading should be **between 0°C and 4°C**. Food stored in a refrigerator will remain cold **for approximately 4 to 6 hours**, depending on the amount of food and whether the refrigerator door is opened during the outage.

After power outages that last more than six hours, you must clean out your refrigerator and get rid of any food that may have spoiled. Use the following table to decide what needs to be discarded.

Refrigerated food		
Categories	Keep <sup>1</sup>	Discard
Dairy products	Firm cheeses in block form, (cheddar, Swiss, mozzarella, etc.), parmesan cheese, cheese in slices, butter, margarine	Milk, mother's milk (opened container), cream, soft cheese, cream cheese
Fruits and vegetables	Whole fruits and vegetables, pasteurized fruit juice	Vegetable juice (opened container), unpasteurized fruit juice, cooked vegetables or raw prepared vegetables
Prepared salads		Salads containing meat, poultry, fish, pasta, or cooked vegetables; cole slaw
Meat, poultry, fish and seafood		All prepared meat-, poultry- or fish-based food, whether raw or cooked
Soups and sauces		All soups and sauces containing meat juice; cream soups
Eggs		Shell eggs, liquid eggs, egg-based foods and desserts (quiches, pastry cream)
Desserts	Cooked fruit pies, cakes, muffins, and cookies	Desserts containing cream; pastry cream
Pasta		Cooked pasta, pasta sauces, fresh pasta
Spreads	Jams, jellies, marmalade, sweet spreads, peanut butter	
Condiments	Relish, mustard, ketchup, store-bought mayonnaise, salad dressing, BBQ sauce, taco sauce, store-bought vinaigrettes, pickles	Homemade mayonnaise, tartar sauce, horseradish, oyster sauce, garlic in oil

<sup>1</sup>If the food shows signs of spoilage, you had better discard it.

## Freezer

Generally speaking, food stored in a full freezer in proper repair keeps for **48 hours**, if the freezer is not opened. Food in a half-full freezer keeps for **24 hours**. Room temperature also has to be taken into account. The colder the room, the more likely it is that the internal temperature of the freezer will remain steady.

The freezer compartments of refrigerators are not nearly as good at keeping foods frozen as free-standing freezers. This means that the food stored in the freezer section of a refrigerator will thaw more quickly.

**When power is restored**, check to see how much thawing has occurred.

Partially thawed food with **frost** on the surface of the packaging can be refrozen if the food is still hard at the centre.

**Raw** thawed food whose temperature did not rise above 4°C can be cooked and eaten immediately or refrozen after cooking.

Food that is safe to keep after **completely thawed**, such as firm cheeses in block form, bakery products (bread, muffins, bread dough, cakes without filling, fruit pies, biscuits), pasteurized fruit juice and fruit, may be refrozen if the containers are undamaged.

**Completely thawed perishable food** must be thrown out if it was exposed to temperatures above 4°C. The following food is considered perishable:

- meat;
- poultry;
- fish and seafood;
- dairy products;
- eggs;
- raw or cooked food that contains any of the above.

## Floods

After a flood, any food that may have come in contact with flood waters must be thrown out, whether perishable or not.

**If there was no power outage and your food was not in contact with flood waters, refer to the *Thermoguide* to determine what you should keep and what you should throw out.**

Always remember that you should never take chances with food that shows signs of spoilage or that appears off. When in doubt, throw it out!

For further information, contact the Direction générale de la santé animale et de l'inspection des aliments (DGSAIA) at toll-free 1-800-463-5023.