

## Canned & Dry



### Storage:

All food, including canned and dry foods should be kept at least 6 inches off the ground. When putting food away, remember that it should not be stored up against the walls.

### Temperatures:

Canned and dry foods should be stored in a cool dry place—not too hot or too cold.

### Time Limits:

See Packaging Dates on back of this pamphlet.

Canned goods of low acidity can last for up to 2-5 years unopened in a pantry (such as; meat, poultry, fish, gravy, stew, soups, beans, carrots, corn, peas, and potatoes).

Canned goods, high acid can last for up to 12-18 months unopened in a pantry (such as; juices, fruit, sauerkraut, tomato soup, and foods with vinegar-based sauces).

### Handling:

With all foods you should use a first-in first-out distribution model to ensure that your stock does not become outdated.

### Tips:

When an item's packaging has broken open and food is exposed, it should **always** be thrown out.

### When to Discard Canned Foods:

- Severe dent to the seam
- Dents that come to a point in the can's body
- Missing or unreadable labels
- Swollen or bulging ends
- Holes or signs of leaking
- Rust that can't be wiped off

## Packaging Dates



### Best / Best if Used By Date:

The approximate date an item is good for. This does not mean that the product is unsafe to eat after this date; canned goods can last 6-8 months after this date depending on the item. The "best if used by" date is set by the manufacturer to let the consumer know how long the item is expected to last at its highest quality.

### Sell / Pull By Date:

The last date a product will be offered for sale in a commercial establishment, allowing time for home use under proper storage conditions after the date. Generally, this is used for perishable products such as; meats, dairy, refrigerated juices, and fresh baked goods.

### Expiration Date:

The last date a product should be used; usually used with drugs, packaged yeast, and refrigerated dough products. Not many products carry expiration dates.

### Pack / Package Date:

This refers to the date that the food (fresh meat for example) was packed or processed. Consumers can tell which package is fresher and choose that one. A "pack date" is not an indication of food safety.

### Coded / Closed Date:

This is a series of letters, numbers, or both used by the manufacturer to track foods across state lines and, if necessary, to recall them. This code isn't meant as a use by date.

*\* Please note that the FDA is working on a new system of dating food products that may come into use within the next year or two.*

# FOOD SAFETY GUIDELINES

Maryland Food Bank  
Pantry on the Go Program



MARYLAND  
FOOD BANK  
UNTIL HUNGER ENDS.

For questions, please contact the Food Safety Officer at 410-737-8282 ext. 214.

## Refrigerated

### Storage:

Store refrigerated foods in the fridge until you are ready to distribute them.

### Temperature:

Refrigerators or coolers should be capable of storing food at 41°F or lower. Place a thermometer inside the unit to periodically check the temperature.

Bacteria that causes food borne illness grows rapidly between 41°F and 135°F. Keep perishable foods out of this range to help prevent food poisoning.

Do not store raw foods over cooked or ready-to-eat foods like salads.

### Handling:

For distribution you should use some sort of shuttle process between your fridge and your distribution area. In your distribution area and during transport you should use one of the following; refrigerator, freezer, thermal blankets and/or coolers with ice, ice packs, or dry ice.

### Tips:

Try to keep the refrigerated food out of the fridge for the shortest time possible. Distribute food in small batches and make more trips to the fridge rather than bringing all the food out at once.

Items that need to be kept refrigerated will always state “Keep Refrigerated” on the package.

## Frozen

### Storage:

Store frozen foods in the freezer until you are ready to distribute them.

### Temperature:

Frozen food items should be kept frozen solid. High sugar or salt items—like ice cream or frozen entrees—freeze at 0°F, while ice freezes at 32°F.

### Handling:

For distribution you should use some sort of shuttle process between your freezer and your distribution area. In your distribution area, and during transport you should use one of the following: refrigerator, freezer, thermal blankets and/or coolers with ice, ice packs, or dry ice.

### Tips:

Try to keep the frozen food out of the freezer for the shortest time possible. Distribute food in small batches and make more trips to the freezer rather than bringing all the food out at once.

## Sanitation

- Employees and volunteers should wash their hands before and after handling food.
- Food should not be stored on the ground.
- Store chemicals away/separate from food.
- An all-purpose kitchen cleaner should be used to wipe down surfaces that will come into contact with food, provided that it is rinsed off with water afterwards. These surfaces include; tables, counters, coolers, refrigerators, and freezers.

## Produce

### Storage:

If there are instructions on the packaging that directs you on how to store the produce, follow those directions.

Semi-processed or prepared produce should be refrigerated. Refrigerators should be at 41°F or lower. This includes cut fruit, bagged salads, and baby carrots.

All other produce should be kept cool and out of direct sunlight when possible.

### Temperatures:

Produce should be kept under 65°F, provided that the label does not state ‘Keep Refrigerated’. Sprouts, cut fruit, cut vegetables, and bagged lettuces should always be stored under 41°F.

### Handling:

Do not attempt to prepare the produce by cutting it or by removing packaging of prepared/processed produce. (Unprocessed produce like potatoes in a bag are fine.)

Always remove bad produce before distribution.

### Tips:

Clients should wash their produce when they get home and definitely before eating. A solution of 1 part vinegar to 3 parts water has been shown to be an effective wash for produce.

