

SHARE
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It Shore Looks Pretty, Dare I Eat It?

Christmas is come and gone, the wrappings are in the trash, the gifts are on display. Now come the questions - are those flavored oils safe? What about the pepper sauces? The cheese and sausage boxes? How long will they keep? How do I store them? Here are some answers. If you have more specific worries, call your local Extension office.

First the oils, flavored with peppers, herbs, or fruits - yes the commercially-produced flavored oils are safe. Home made flavored oils are risky, because they have probably not been sterilized. Commercial operations can use hydrogen peroxide, high pressure or other means to kill bacterial spores on the herbs or peppers, without cooking them. We don't have those capabilities in the home. Do refrigerate them after opening.

What about flavored vinegars? Yes, those should also be safe, whether home or commercially made. The vinegar will keep bacteria from growing. If anything would grow and spoil the vinegars, it would be mold or yeast. You would know they are there, because they would either start blowing bubbles at you, or make green fuzzies on the surface. If you see either of those signs, throw it out. Meantime, storing them in the refrigerator is the safe thing to do.

Pepper sauces? Again, commercially made products should be safe, especially if they are made with vinegar and no oil. Home-made, or with no ingredient label? If you can, diplomatically inquire of the giver whether there is oil, or just vinegar, and if they were processed in a pressure cooker. If you can't find out, or just want to be extra

careful, hide them in the bottom of the garbage can.

Cheese and sausage boxes? If they were not refrigerated as soon as they were delivered, don't try to keep them now. In the refrigerator they will keep for months. Out of the cold, they might be safe, but they might not, and you don't want to be the one to discover that they were not!

Jams, jellies, marmalades and other sweet preserves might spoil if mold gets into them, but like the vinegars, you will be able to see it. Do not try to scrape off the mold and eat the rest. If it gets moldy, throw it all away. Once opened, they belong in the refrigerator.

Play it safe, and you can be enjoying Christmas for the rest of the year!