

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

FAX: 932-5261

June 8, 2003

BY: Mary A. Keith, Ph.D., L.D.  
Food, Nutrition and Health Agent**HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY**

5339 S. County Road 579

Seffner, FL 33584-3334

PH:(813)744-5519 x 136, FAX:744-5776  
e-mail:makeith@mail.ifas.ufl.edu**Safe Food When the Power's Been Off**

Even if our prayers are answered and we don't have to face a hurricane this season, the odds are very high that there will be a few power outages due to storms. So, here's some advance info on what to keep and what to pitch out when you discover the power's been off for several hours. And as always, you can call me for more details or specific foods. (813-744-5519, ext 136)

When you know the power is off, as much as possible don't open the freezer or refrigerator. A full freezer should keep food safe for up to 2 days if the door stays shut. A refrigerator will keep foods safely for several hours at least. Some folks put an ice cube on a saucer in their freezer, especially if they are going to be out of the house for several days. If they open the door and find the cube is now a puddle, either a wet one or a frozen one, they know that the power was off long enough to allow the ice to melt. It's a warning to throw out the risky foods.

What are the risky foods? Here are the ones to start with. Any food that is completely thawed and warm, except baked goods and nuts, should be discarded. If juices from other thawed foods have dripped onto baked goods or nuts then they should be discarded too. If they show any signs of water damage or mold, discard them.

If you find frozen dinners or pizza, or frozen cookie dough when they are thawed but still as cold as they would be in the refrigerator you can cook and eat them

immediately. Frozen leftovers and homemade casseroles should be discarded if they have completely thawed. Custard pies or other baked goods containing a creamy milk or egg filling should be discarded.

Plain meat and poultry items - if these have thawed but still have ice crystals inside, if you can squeeze them and feel a crunch inside, they can be safely refrozen as is. If they no longer have ice crystals but are still as cold as they would be in the refrigerator you can cook them immediately and either eat them or refreeze them as a leftover, cooked foods. Seafood that has thawed but is still very cold, like in a refrigerator, should be cooked and eaten immediately or discarded. Don't try to refreeze seafood after it has thawed.

Vegetables and fruits that are plain, not in a sauce, can be refrozen if they still have crunchy ice crystals inside. If they are thawed but still refrigerator-cold, they too can be cooked and refrozen.

Milk and soft cheeses such as cottage cheese should be discarded if they have thawed. Hard cheese and butter can be refrozen if they are still cold.

If the refrigerator is off, these foods will keep for several days safely: butter and margarine; fresh fruits and vegetables; dried fruits and nuts; hard and processed cheese; opened jars of mayonnaise, salad dressing, jelly, jam, pickles and relish, peanut butter, soy and barbeque sauce, ketchup and mustard, bread.

If these foods are warmer than a usual refrigerator temperature for more than 2 hours, or you don't know how long they have been warm, throw them out: raw or cooked meats, poultry, seafood or dishes that contain them; milk, cream and soft cheese; cooked rice, pasta and pasta salads; egg substitutes; lunch meats, deli meats,

hot dogs, pizza, casseroles, soups, stews; refrigerated bread or cookie dough; baked goods with custard, cream or egg-based fillings.

Here's a main dish you can make with your hurricane supplies when you have no power for cooking. Let's hope you don't need it for that, but just choose to make it as a nutritious, easy dinner. It will be safest if you can refrigerate the beans and tuna before you open them, and be tastiest if you refrigerate the salad for several hours after mixing to allow the flavors to blend.

#### Tuna with a Twist Salad

1 can 15 ½ oz pinto beans, rinsed and drained	¼ C chopped green pepper
1 can 6 ½ oz tuna in water, drained	1 medium tomato, chopped
¼ C chopped celery	pinch black pepper
2 Tbsp low-cal Italian dressing	

Combine all ingredients, refrigerate for several hours. Serve on salad greens. Serves 4 for a side dish, 2 for a main meal entree.

*Hillsborough County Extension is a cooperative service of the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners and the University of Florida.*

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is an Equal Employment Opportunity - Affirmative Action Employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race, color, sex, age, handicap or national origin. COOPERATIVE EXTENSION IN AGRICULTURE, HOME ECONOMICS, STATE OF FLORIDA, IFAS, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, AND BOARDS OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COOPERATING