Frozen Food Safety After a Power Outage

Guidelines for handling frozen foods:

**Meat, Fish, Poultry, Vegetables, Fruits, Cheese and Butter:**
- If they still have ice crystals and feel crunchy on the inside, they can safely be refrozen immediately.
- If they are still as cold as a refrigerator, cook now, then eat or refreeze.
- If they are completely thawed, just cool, or feel warm, discard them.

**Discard**, or cook & use immediately only if they are still icy cold:
- Frozen dinners, pizzas, left-overs, casseroles, soups, stews, cookie dough. If warm or soft, discard.

**Discard** if they have thawed, are soft or are warm:
- Custard pies and pies containing eggs or milk.
- Milk.

**Keep:**
- Baked goods, breads, cakes, etc., and nuts. As long as these products were not touched by water, and no juices from other melting foods dripped on them, they will be safe. If they show any signs of water damage or mold, throw them away.

Food in a refrigerator should be safe if the power is out less than 4 hours.
- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible.
- Perishable food that has been at or above 40° F for 2 hours must be discarded.
- Dry ice can be used according to package instructions to extend safe storage time of frozen foods.
- Keep 5% bleach on hand for sanitizing.
- For more information, visit: http://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/emergency/index.html

Keeping thermometers in the refrigerator and freezer will eliminate guessing whether your food is safe or not.

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Safe Handling of Food after a Storm

What to keep, what to discard, & how to tell the difference.

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Exposure to Flood or Rain Waters

Some food containers and utensils can be sanitized and used.

► Foods in unopened, commercially sealed metal cans and foil pouches can be sanitized and used. Sanitize all containers before opening.

► Remove labels and wash the containers in strong detergent. Rinse, then soak in bleach water before opening them.

► If you have bleach that is 5% chlorine (it should say on the label what strength it is), add 3/4 teaspoon of bleach to a quart of water (or 1 Tbsp of bleach per gallon of water.) If the bleach is only 2%, use 2 tsp in a quart of water (or 3 Tbsp per gallon.)

► Soak the cans or jars for 15 minutes, then allow to air-dry before opening.

► If sanitizing multiple cans at one time be sure to write the contents on each can with an indelible marker.

Sanitize Dishes and Utensils

► Wash and sanitize plates, glasses, and dishes the same way. Pots, pans and metal utensils can also be sanitized by boiling for 10 minutes.

► Wooden and plastic utensils, including baby bottles and pacifiers can NOT be sanitized and must be discarded.

Home canned foods that have been exposed to storm waters must be discarded.

Food—Keep, or Discard?

DISCARD if exposed to flood waters:

► Commercial food with screw tops, snap and pull-top lids and crimped caps;
► Home canned foods, including jellies;
► Jars such as mayonnaise that have waxed cardboard under the lid;
► All foods in paper, cardboard or plastic packages;
► Fresh meats, fish, eggs, milk and produce;
► Opened containers of foods;
► Dry things such as flour or sugar in canisters’;
► Dented or rusted cans;
► Cans that are leaking or bulging.

Loss of Refrigeration

These foods will keep safely for a few days at room temperature:

- Butter and margarine;
- Fresh fruits and vegetables;
- Dried fruits, nuts, coconut;
- Cheeses, hard and processed;
- Opened jars of salad dressing, mayonnaise, peanut butter, jelly and jam, relish, pickles and olives, taco and barbecue sauces, mustard and ketchup;
- Fruit juice, fruit pies;
- Fresh herbs, onions, spices, etc;
- Breads, cakes, rolls or muffins without fillings.

These foods, if warmer than refrigerator temperature for more than 2 hours, MUST BE DISCARDED:

- Raw and cooked meats, poultry and seafood, and dishes containing any of them;
- Milk, cream, soft cheeses;
- Cooked rice, pasta, pasta salad;
- Custard, chiffon, cheese pies or pastries containing these fillings;
- Eggs and egg substitutes;
- Lunch meats, hot dogs, pizza with meat;
- Casseroles, soups, stews;
- Refrigerated dough, cookie dough.