

Food Storage Tips—Quick Reference

Tips for storing food so that it lasts longer and gets wasted less

Why worry about preventing wasted food? Although composting is a great way to deal with inevitable food scraps like banana peels, it is much better to eat the food we can than to compost it. Prevention helps the environment as well as our budgets. After all, it takes a lot of resources to get food from the fields to our homes.

While no one buys food with the intention of throwing it away, based on recent estimates, the average household in Saint Paul **wastes up to \$96** worth of once edible food **every month!**

Storing your food properly can make it last much longer to help you save money and reduce waste. Post this on your fridge as a quick reference for how to store some common groups of foods.

You can also check our more detailed list of food storage tips on our website at www.makedirtnotwaste.org. Try out a tip. Love it? Hate it? Have a better idea? Log in so you can rate it and leave a comment, or add a tip of your own.

Food storage without plastic

We are learning more and more about the toxicity of plastic and the dangers of storing or heating food in it. There are alternatives that are safer for you and the environment! To learn more, visit www.eurekarecycling.org/plastics.cfm.

Some general storage tips to keep in mind:

- Keep apples, bananas, citrus, and tomatoes away from other produce—they give off ethylene gas that makes other produce ripen/deteriorate faster.
- Untie all bunches (herbs, greens, etc.) to allow the produce to breathe.
- The length of time that the food will last depends on how fresh it was when you bought it. Local, in-season produce will last much longer than something that has been shipped a long way. For all perishable food, use your nose and eyes to determine if it has gone bad. Sometimes, it may just be past its prime for raw eating but can be cooked—pears, apples, berries, or other fruit can be made into sauces, crisps, or cobblers. Stale bread can be kept for breadcrumbs, French toast, or bread pudding.
- All frozen things should be in an airtight container with as much air removed as possible. Air contains moisture that creates ice crystals that “burn” the food or make it deteriorate faster. Freezing in a flat, rectangular, clear, glass container works lets you see your food and stack containers. Don’t forget to label when it went in the freezer, and what it is!
- Many of these foods can be dried in a food dehydrator or canned with a hot water bath canner or a pressure canner. Check out a dehydrating or a canning guide to find the best recipes for preserving large quantities of produce.
- For best results, keep your fridge between 37° F and 40° F, and your freezer between 0° F and 2° F.
- Use your fridge’s crisper drawer. The higher humidity environment benefits many vegetables by helping them last longer. If you can adjust the humidity setting on your crisper drawer, set it on high humidity for leafy greens or on low for non-leafy vegetables like carrots and cucumbers.



COMPOST

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	Counter/Room Temp	Fridge	Freezer	Exceptions	
Fruits	Apples, pears	Ripen pears on counter.	Keep in the fridge; remove bad apples/pears.	 For longer storage: keep in cool place in a cardboard box with damp towel over them.	
	Berries, cherries, grapes	Last longer in fridge.	Store single layer, unwashed, airtight container.	Freeze in single layer on cookie sheet. Store airtight. If you need to wash ahead, put a little vinegar in water.	
	Citrus	Last longer in fridge.	Keep in open container in fridge.	Freeze juice in ice cube trays. Store peels and cubes airtight.	
	Melons	Ripen on counter.	Store ripe and cut melons in the fridge.	Freeze cut up melon and store airtight for smoothies.	
	Stone fruits <i>(peaches, plums, apricots, etc.)</i>	Ripen on counter.	Once ripe, store in open container in fridge.	Peel and freeze, then store airtight.	Cherries should be kept in the fridge—follow berry guidelines.
	Tropical fruits <i>(bananas, avocados, etc.)</i>	Ripen on counter. Keep bananas on counter.	Store ripe in the fridge. Keep pit in avocado to keep it from going brown.	Store peeled or unpeeled bananas in freezer to use for baking or smoothies.	Don't put bananas in fridge, even when ripe.
Vegetables	Cucumber, squash	Last longer in fridge. Winter squash can be stored in a cool, dark place.	Wrap whole or cut in damp towel in fridge.	Blanch and freeze zucchini . Store airtight.	
	Greens <i>(salad and cooking)</i>	Kale or collards can keep on counter in cup of cold water changed daily. Better to keep in fridge.	Store airtight in fridge with damp towel.	Blanch and freeze cooking greens. Store airtight.	Store broccoli in open/loose container in crisper.
	Mushrooms	Last longer in fridge.	Store in a paper bag in fridge.	Sauté and then freeze in airtight container.	
	Root Vegetables <i>(potatoes, onions, carrots, etc.)</i>	Store in cool, dark place with original dirt on them or in wet sand. No potatoes with onions.	Keep in airtight container with a damp towel. Store partial onions in fridge with paper skin on in airtight container.	Better stored in root cellar, but can blanch, freeze, and store airtight.	Potatoes and whole onions —no fridge. Potatoes can be kept near apples to help keep them from sprouting.
	Stalk vegetables <i>(celery, asparagus, etc.)</i>	Lasts longer in fridge.	Keep standing up in jar of water.	Blanch and freeze. Store airtight.	
	Tomatoes, peppers, eggplant	Tomatoes on counter, unless really ripe. Keep away from other produce.	Keep in crisper drawer. Keep seeds and stem attached to partial peppers .	Freeze raw or blanched. Store airtight.	Keep eggplant away from moisture.
	Herbs	Keep basil on counter in damp towel or cup of water.	Put in jars with a little water, covered loosely with a damp towel or airtight in crisper.	Chop and freeze in ice cube trays; add olive oil to fill. Store airtight.	Don't put basil in fridge.
Meat, poultry, fish	NO 	Keep on bottom shelf of fridge.	Freeze individual portions between wax paper and store airtight.	Storage length: Fridge, uncooked: 1-2 days; cooked: 4-5 days. Freeze: several months.	
Dairy	NO	Don't keep in door, keep in colder parts of fridge like bottom shelf. Wrap cheese in wax paper to breathe.	Freeze liquid in ice cube trays or jars. Freeze firm cheese cubed or grated. Store airtight.	Slightly whip cream before freezing so it doesn't get grainy.	
Grains <i>(rice, pasta, flours, bread, etc.)</i>	Wrap bread in wax paper and put in tin. Store other grains airtight.	Cooked grains.	Freeze flours, sliced bread, breadcrumbs, stale bread, and cooked rice and other grains in airtight containers.	Don't keep bread in fridge unless using for toast—it will dry out.	
Nuts	Keep airtight. Lasts longer in fridge.	Keep away from high odor foods—nuts will take on other odors.	Freeze in airtight containers.	 © 659/flickr	