

Freezer storage chart

How long food holds its best quality at 0°F, from USDA FSIS, FDA, and FoodKeeper guidance. Every number is a quality window, not a safety cutoff. Food kept continuously at 0°F stays safe to eat indefinitely.

MEAT, POULTRY, AND PROCESSED MEATS	
Steaks	6 to 12 months
Roasts	4 to 12 months
Chops	4 to 6 months
Ground beef, pork, turkey, or chicken	3 to 4 months
Whole chicken or turkey	1 year
Chicken or turkey pieces	9 months
Cooked poultry (casseroles, plain pieces)	4 to 6 months
Fried chicken	4 months
Bacon	1 month
Raw sausage	1 to 2 months
Hot dogs and lunch meat	1 to 2 months
Fully cooked ham	1 to 2 months
SEAFOOD	
Lean fish (cod, flounder, haddock)	6 to 8 months
Fatty fish (salmon, mackerel, bluefish)	2 to 3 months
Shrimp, scallops, crayfish, or squid	6 to 18 months
Live clams, mussels, crab, or oysters	2 to 3 months
Cooked fish or shellfish	1 to 3 months
Smoked fish	9 to 12 months
DAIRY AND EGGS	
Butter	6 to 9 months
Margarine	12 months
Milk	3 months
Hard cheese (cheddar, Swiss)	6 months
Soft cheese (Brie)	6 months
Yogurt	1 to 2 months
Raw egg whites or yolks	1 year
Cream cheese	Does not freeze well
Heavy cream	Freezes, texture changes
Sour cream, cottage cheese, eggs in the shell	Do not freeze well
FRUIT	
Berries and cherries	1 year
Bananas, peeled	2 to 3 months
Apples, cooked or sliced	8 months
Peaches, nectarines, or plums	2 months
Melon, cut into balls	1 month
Citrus fruit, whole	Do not freeze
VEGETABLES	
Broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, carrots, celery, or leafy greens	10 to 12 months
Green or wax beans	8 months
Corn on the cob	8 months
Bell peppers or chiles	6 to 8 months
Summer or winter squash	10 to 12 months
Potatoes, cooked and mashed	10 to 12 months
Tomatoes	2 months
Lettuce, cucumbers, or radishes	Do not freeze
BREAD, BAKED GOODS, AND LEFTOVERS	
Bread, commercial loaf or tortillas	3 to 5 months
Dinner rolls, baked	3 to 5 months
Muffins	6 months
Cookies, homemade or bakery	2 months
Cookies, commercially packaged	8 to 12 months
Cookie dough or ready-to-bake pie crust	2 months
Soups, stews, and chili	2 to 3 months
Cooked meat casseroles	2 to 3 months
Pizza, cooked	1 to 2 months
Cooked rice, potatoes, or vegetable side dishes	1 to 2 months

Three safe ways to thaw. In the refrigerator, the slowest method and the only one that lets you refreeze raw meat without cooking it first. In cold water, with the package sealed and the water changed every 30 minutes, then cook right away. In the microwave on defrost, then cook immediately. Never thaw food on the counter: bacteria multiply fastest between 40°F and 140°F. Most raw vegetables need a quick blanch before freezing, with onions, peppers, and fresh herbs the main exceptions.