

Play It Safe!

Helpful hints for safely storing, handling
and preparing food





At Heinen's Fine Foods, we employ strict storage and preparation guidelines and monitor our prepared foods to ensure the freshness and quality of your purchases. Our hope is that the information in this brochure will help you understand how to properly store, handle and prepare food, so you can maintain the same store-quality freshness at home.

Helpful Hint: When shopping, gather frozen and refrigerated items at the end of your shopping trip to ensure that those products stay cold until you arrive home. If you're out running errands, make the grocery store your last stop so your food doesn't sit in a hot vehicle.

Extending the Life of Food

Although freezing food can extend the “life” of many products, don’t assume that you can safely store them indefinitely.

Listed below are some suggested storage lengths for common items:

Food	Refrigerated	Frozen
Sliced deli meat	3 to 5 days	1 to 2 months
Hard cheeses	3 to 4 weeks (opened) 6 months (unopened)	6 months
Sour cream	7 to 21 days	Do not freeze
Uncooked ground meat	1 to 2 days	3 to 4 months
Cooked ground meat	1 to 2 days	3 to 4 months
Fresh poultry	1 to 2 days	6 to 12 months
Fresh shrimp	1 to 2 days	3 to 6 months
Fresh fish	1 to 2 days	6 months
Spinach	1 to 2 days	10 to 12 months
Berries/cherries	1 to 2 days	4 months

Keep in mind that these are simply suggestions. Always trust your senses. If an item appears off-color or has an unappealing odor or texture, throw it away.

Keeping Bacteria at Bay

The best way to prevent foods from spoiling or making you sick is to reduce the chance of bacteria growth. Follow these tips to keep perishable products from becoming contaminated:

- Keep cold foods below 40°F and hot foods above 140°F.
- Store highly perishable meat, seafood and dairy products in the coldest part of the refrigerator.
- Refrigerate prepared dishes within two hours of serving.
- Never keep perishable items at room temperature for more than two hours.
- To avoid cross-contamination, be sure to wash hands, utensils, and preparation and cooking surfaces between handling raw and cooked foods.

Lowdown on Dairy Products

Although mold is usually a dead giveaway for spoilage, some cheeses can be salvaged after mold develops on the surface. On hard cheeses, trim away surface mold and an additional half-inch before using the remainder of the product. Unfortunately, softer cheeses such as blue cheese, cream cheese or ricotta cannot be saved in this manner and must be thrown away at the first sign of spoilage.

Although milk is pasteurized, it must remain refrigerated to prevent the growth of bacteria. Let your nose be your best guide. If your milk smells sour or at all unusual, discard it.

When it comes to storing eggs, it's important to place cartons inside the refrigerator and not on the door, because the temperature fluctuation and overall warmer temperature in this area may cause spoilage. Eggs may contain salmonella bacteria, which is why you must thoroughly wash your hands, utensils and preparation surfaces after handling raw eggs.

Take care when cooking eggs, making sure that the whites and yolks are firm. Quiches and casseroles should pass a “toothpick test” by coming out clean, while custards should coat a metal spoon. After preparing recipes containing cooked eggs, refrigerate leftovers within two hours of serving.

Meat of the Matter

Timing is important when handling meat and poultry. After you bring it home from the store, immediately refrigerate (to below 40°F) or freeze it. When you’re ready to cook your frozen meat or poultry, be sure to allow yourself enough time to thaw it in the refrigerator rather than at room temperature.

During the cooking process, keep your hands and utensils clean and all meat and its juices separate from other items. Use a clean plate to carry raw steaks, burgers and other items to the grill. After the meat is cooked, use a separate platter to bring it to the table. Although heat kills bacteria, it’s best to play it safe and use a thermometer to make sure your meat reaches 160°F (165°F for poultry) before serving it.



Proper Care and Handling of Produce

Before preparing fruits and vegetables for meals, always remember to wash and disinfect knives and cutting surfaces that may have come in contact with raw meat or poultry. Better yet, cut and properly store your produce before preparing meats.

In general, it's best not to wash produce before you store it, as moisture may encourage molding and rotting during storage. While we encourage you to wash fruits and vegetables with water and a vegetable brush, some items, such as cucumbers and apples, may be covered with a thin coating of wax to lock in moisture and preserve them for delivery. This wax is safe and edible.

If you would like to extend the life of vegetables, consider blanching or partially cooking them before storing them in the freezer. Some delicate fruits and berries also can be frozen and packed in sugar or liquid sugar syrup.

Finally, always handle produce with care. Cuts and bruises on produce are entryways for microbes, which encourage the produce to spoil faster.



Scoop on Seafood

Fresh seafood should never smell “fishy,” but should carry a light, sea-like scent. Examine fish for color and texture. Slimy, discolored or dull-looking seafood is not fresh.

Buy shellfish such as clams, mussels or lobster while they are still alive. Live crab and lobster will move their legs. Give mussels and oysters a tap if they are open. If they close their shells, they are still alive.

Frozen and packaged fish should be free of freezer burn and packed in a moisture-proof container. Examine canned items to ensure containers are undamaged, and be sure to purchase and consume them by the appropriate date.

Resources

For more tips and strategies on preparing healthy meals, please visit the following Web sites:

www.foodsafety.gov

www.homefoodsafety.org

www.fightbac.org

Here's to Your Good Health

You can enjoy tremendous health benefits when you make small but significant changes in the way you eat. A great first step is to take advantage of the Healthy Appetite program, designed by Cleveland Clinic and Heinen's. For nutrition tips and meal ideas, please visit **www.heinens.com/healthyappetite**. Here's to your good health!

Healthy Appetite

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the resources of
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This brochure is brought to you by **Healthy Appetite**, a program designed by **Cleveland Clinic and Heinen's** to provide shoppers with nutritional and educational information, so they can make healthier food and lifestyle choices – choices that will ultimately enhance personal health and wellness.

This information should be relied upon for health education purposes only. It does not provide a complete overview of the topics covered and should not replace the independent judgment of a physician.



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