

FOOD STORAGE RECOMMENDATIONS

The first food in should be the first food out (date all food containers). The reason for this is that, when discussing the usefulness of food products, there are really two shelf lives to be considered: 1) the nutritional life, and 2) the palatability life.

It is necessary to store all food products properly to ensure maximum shelf life. Store the product in a cool area, avoiding long-term storage above 75°F, and be careful not to puncture or damage the packaging (pouches, cans). Under these conditions, the products will maintain their shelf life for product quality, flavor, and nutritional value.

For example, if you've stored your food in a garage that has a temperature of 90°F, you should expect a shelf life less than half of what could be obtained at room temperature (70-75°F); this in turn is less than half the storage life that you could get if you kept them in your refrigerator at 40°F. Optimal storage temperature is 40-60°F.

Ideally, the storage location for canned items (freeze-dried/dehydrated) should have a relative humidity level of 15% or less. When this is not possible, you'll want to minimize moisture as much as possible.

All containers should be kept off the floor and out of direct contact from exterior walls to reduce the chances of condensation brought on by temperature differences between the container and the surface it's resting against. Stay alert to any moisture retention in the cardboard case boxes.

Long term storage foods do not become unsafe when stored longer than the recommended time, but their nutrient quality fades and their flavor, color, and texture diminishes. In general, the most susceptible ingredients to aging are products with dairy items, shellfish, brown rice, and tree nuts.

After opening, the manufacturers recommend using the contents within 1 to 2 weeks for best results and taste. Treat any leftover food as you would fresh food. Safely store unused product between uses (i.e., use plastic can lids, tightly seal the resealable pouches, or place unused food in other sealed containers or zip-lock bags).

Ideal Storage Locations:

The best place to store foods is in a cool, dark, dry area. Here are some suggestions:

- Below ground (a [root cellar](#)), in basements, or cellars where the temperature is cooler, or at least consistent. But remember—humidity and condensation can be extremely detrimental in the long term storage of canned food items.
- An interior closet, or a well-insulated pantry close to the kitchen (but away from heat sources).
- Under stairs, in the linen or broom closet.

FOOD STORAGE RECOMMENDATIONS (continued)

- Under the bed or under furniture (consider storing your food in food-grade containers that are shaped like a sweater box that will easily slide under the average bed).
- Set aside a whole room for food storage. Install shelves or cabinets (buy or build your own) to store your food.