

# Texas Agricultural Extension Service

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*People Helping People*

# HOME FOOD STORAGE

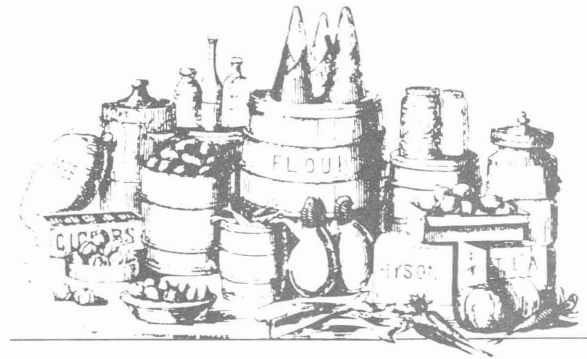
## SHELF·FREEZER REFRIGERATOR

# HOME FOOD STORAGE

Household foods are generally stored on shelves, in the refrigerator or in the freezer. Proper food storage is important to help:

- control the cost of food by avoiding waste
- retain nutrients
- preserve flavor, color and texture of food
- prevent food borne illness

The most common problems in food storage are underprocessing, mishandling and improper storage between preparation and serving.



# SHELF STORAGE

Store shelf stable foods in the coolest cabinets or pantry and away from appliances which produce heat.

Many staples and canned foods have a relatively long shelf life, but buy only what you expect to use within the time recommended for each product. Put dates on the food packages that are not date coded and use the oldest first. Geographic area affects storage time. Warm and humid climates shorten the shelf life of foods.

Buy packaged food in fresh-looking packages. Dusty cans or torn labels may indicate old stock. Also check for dates. Carefully check dented cans for leakage and rust before buying. Do not purchase badly dented or bulging cans.

Certain products last shorter or longer periods depending on initial quality and storage. Recommended storage times should be considered "rules of thumb."

## FOOD

## STORAGE TIME at 70 degrees F or 21 degrees C.

## HANDLING HINTS

### STAPLES

Baking powder	12 months or expiration date on can	Keep dry and covered.
Baking soda	2 years	Keep dry and covered.
Bouillon cubes or granules	1 year	Keep dry and covered.
Bread crumbs, dried	6 months	Keep dry and covered.
Cereals		
ready-to-eat (unopened)	6-8 months**	
ready-to-eat (opened)	1-2 months	Refold package liner tightly after opening.
cooked	6 months	
Chocolate, pre-melted	12 months	Keep cool.
semi-sweet	1 year	Keep cool.
unsweetened	18 months	Keep cool.

\*\*Total time "unopened" product can be stored at home. If recommendation is for "opened" product, subtract this time from the total storage or "unopened" time.

# S H E L F · S T O R A G E

FOOD	STORAGE TIME at 70 degrees F or 21 degrees C.	HANDLING HINTS
Chocolate syrup		
unopened	1 year**	
opened	4 months	Cover tightly. <i>Refrigerate after opening.</i>
Cocoa mixes	8 months	Cover tightly.
Coffee		
cans (unopened)	2 years**	
cans (opened)	2 weeks	<i>Refrigerate after opening; keep tightly closed.</i>
instant (unopened)	1-2 years**	
instant (opened)	2 weeks	Use dry measuring spoon.
Cornmeal	12 months	Keep tightly closed.
Cornstarch	18 months	Keep tightly closed.
Flour		
white	6-8 months	Keep in airtight container.
whole wheat	6-8 months	<i>Keep refrigerated.</i> Store in airtight container.
Gelatin, all types	18 months	Keep in original container.
Grits	12 months	Store in airtight container.
Honey	12 months	Cover tightly. If it crystallizes, warm jar in pan of hot water.
Jellies and jams	12 months	Cover tightly. <i>Storage life is lengthened if refrigerated after opening.</i>
Non-dairy coffee creamers (dry)		
unopened	9 months**	
opened	6 months	Keep lid tightly closed.
Molasses		
unopened	12 months + **	
opened	6 months	Keep tightly closed. <i>Refrigerate to extend storage life.</i> Remove any light surface mold and use.
Marshmallow creme (unopened)	3-4 months	Cover tightly. <i>Refrigerate after opening to extend storage life.</i> Serve at room temperature.
Marshmallows	2-3 months	Keep in airtight container.
Mayonnaise (unopened)	6 months	<i>Refrigerate after opening.</i>
Milk		
condensed or evaporated (unopened)	12 months	Invert cans every 2 months.
nonfat dry		
unopened	6 months**	
opened	3 months	Put in airtight container.
Pasta (spaghetti, macaroni, etc.)	2 years	Once opened, store in airtight container.
Pectin, liquid (opened)	1 month	Re-cap and <i>refrigerate.</i>
Rice		
white	2 years + **	
flavored or herb	6 months	Keep tightly closed.
Salad dressings		
bottled (unopened)	10-12 months**	
bottled (opened)	3 months	<i>Refrigerate after opening.</i>
made from mix	2 weeks	<i>Refrigerate prepared dressing.</i>

Salad oils			
unopened	6 months		
opened	1-3 months		Small quantities, no refrigeration required. <i>Refrigerate after opening.</i>
Shortenings, solid			
unopened	8 months		Refrigeration not needed.
opened	6 months		Refrigeration not needed.
Sugar			
brown	4 months		Put in airtight container.
confectioners	18 months		Put in airtight container.
granulated	2 years +		Cover tightly.
artificial sweeteners	2 years +		Cover tightly.
Syrups	12 months		Keep tightly closed. <i>Refrigerate to extend storage life.</i> Remove any light surface mold and use.
Tea			
bags	18 months		Put in airtight container.
instant	3 years		Cover tightly.
loose	2 years		Put in airtight container.
Vinegar			
unopened	2 years + **		
opened	12 months		Keep tightly closed. Slightly cloudy appearance doesn't affect vinegar. Distilled vinegar keeps longer than cider vinegar.

## MIXED AND PACKAGED FOODS

Biscuit, brownie, and muffin mixes	9 months		Keep cool and dry.
Cakes, purchased	1-2 days		If butter cream, whipped cream or custard frosting, fillings, refrigerate.
Cake mixes (unopened)	9 months		Keep cool and dry.
Angel food (unopened)	12 months		
Casseroles, complete or add own meat	9-12 months		Keep cool and dry.
Cookies			
homemade	2-3 weeks		Put in airtight container.
packaged	2 months		Keep box tightly closed.
Crackers (unopened)	8 months		Keep box tightly closed.
Frosting, canned mix (unopened)	3 months		<i>Store leftovers in refrigerator.</i>
Hot roll mix (unopened)	12 months		If opened, put in airtight container.
Pancake mix (opened)	6-9 months		Put in airtight container.
Piecrust mix (unopened)	8 months		Keep cool and dry.
Pies and pastries	2-3 days		<i>Refrigerate whipped cream, custard, and chiffon fillings.</i>
Potatoes, instant (unopened)	6-12 months		Keep in airtight package.
Pudding mixes (unopened)	12 months		Keep cool and dry.
Rice, mixes (unopened)	6 months		Keep cool and dry.
Sauce and gravy mixes (unopened)	6-12 months		Keep cool and dry.
Soup mixes (unopened)	12 months		Keep cool and dry.
Toaster pastries (unopened)	2-3 months		Keep in airtight package.

## CANNED AND DRIED FOODS

Canned foods (unopened)	12 months**		Keep cool.
Canned fruit juices	9 months**		Keep cool.
Canned foods (opened)			All opened canned foods:
baby foods	2-3 days		<i>Refrigerate and cover tightly.</i>

# S H E L F · S T O R A G E

FOOD	STORAGE TIME at 70 degrees F or 21 degrees C.	HANDLING HINTS
Canned foods (opened)		<i>Refrigerate.</i>
fish and seafood	2 days	To avoid metallic taste, transfer foods in cans to glass or plastic storage containers, if kept more than one day.
fruit	1 week	
meats	2 days	
pickles and olives	1-2 months	
poultry	2 days	
sauce, tomato	5 days	
vegetables	3 days	
Fruits, dried	6 months to 1 year	Keep cool in airtight container; <i>if possible, refrigerate.</i>
Vegetables, dried	6 months to 1 year	
Catsup, chili sauce		
unopened	12 months**	<i>Should be refrigerated.</i>
opened	3 months	
Mustard, prepared yellow		
unopened	2 years**	<i>May be refrigerated.</i> Stir before using.
opened	6-8 months	
Spices and herbs		
whole spices	1-2 years	Store in airtight containers in dry places away from sunlight and heat. At times, check aroma; if faded replace. Whole cloves, nutmeg and cinnamon sticks maintain quality beyond 2-year period.
ground spices	6 months	
herbs	6 months	
herb/spice blends	6 months	
Vanilla		
unopened	2 years**	Keep tightly closed. Volatile oils escape.
opened	12 months	
Other extracts opened	12 months	Keep tightly closed. Volatile oils escape.

## OTHERS

Cheese, parmesan (grated)		
unopened	10 months**	<i>Refrigerate after opening.</i> Keep tightly closed.
opened	2 months	
Coconut (shredded, canned or packed)		
unopened	12 months**	<i>Refrigerate after opening.</i>
opened	6 months	
Meat substitutes, textured protein products (e.g., imitation bacon bits)	4 months	Keep tightly closed. <i>For longer storage, refrigerate.</i>
Metered-calorie products, instant breakfast	6 months	Keep in can, closed jars or original packets.
Nuts		
in shell or cracked	4 months	<i>Refrigerate or freeze for longer storage</i>
nutmeats, packaged (unopened)		
vacuum can (unopened)	1 year**	
other packaging	3 months**	
Peanut butter		
unopened	6-9 months	Refrigeration not needed.
opened	2-3 months	<i>Keeps longer if refrigerated.</i> Use at room temperature.

Peas and beans, dried	12 months	Store in airtight container in cool place.
Popcorn	2 years	Store in airtight container.
Vegetables, fresh		
onions*	2 weeks	Keep dry and away from sun. For longer storage,
potatoes, white*	2 weeks	keep at about 50 degrees F. Don't refrigerate
sweet potatoes	2 weeks	sweet potatoes.
Whipped topping, dry	12 months	Keep cool and dry.
Yeast, dry	Expiration date on package	

\*These products can be refrigerated to increase their shelf life. Potatoes can be refrigerated for 6 weeks; onions for 6-8 weeks.



# REFRIGERATOR STORAGE

Store food in the home refrigerator from 34 degrees F or 1 degree C to 40 degrees F or 3 degrees C. Foods spoil rapidly above 40 degrees F or 3 degrees C.

The temperature in frostless and self-defrosting refrigerators is fairly uniform throughout the cabinet, including the storage area in the door.

In refrigerators that must be defrosted manually, the coldest area outside the freezing is the chill tray just below it. The area at the bottom of the cabinet is the warmest. The door and hydrator storage areas are usually several degrees higher than the rest of the refrigerator.

When air circulates in the refrigerator, the cooler air moves downward and forces the warmer air near the bottom to rise. This air motion dries out any uncovered or unwrapped food.

In most refrigerators, with the control set for normal operation, the temperature in the general storage area is below 40 degrees F or 3 degrees C. You can check the temperature in a refrigerator by placing a refrigerator thermometer at different locations in the cabinet. If the temperature is above 40 degrees F or 3 degrees C, regulate the control to lower the temperatures.

Frequent opening of the refrigerator door, especially on warm, humid days, or an accumulation of thick frost on the freezing unit, raises the temperature of the refrigerator.

Use food stored in the refrigerator quickly—don't depend on maximum storage time.

Clean the refrigerator regularly to cut down on food odors. Remove spoiled foods immediately to prevent decay from spreading to other foods.

# REFRIGERATOR STORAGE

FOOD	STORAGE TIME at 34-40 degrees F or 1-3 degrees C.	HANDLING HINTS
<b>DAIRY PRODUCTS</b>		
Butter	1 month	Wrap or cover tightly. Hold only 2-day butter supply or 2-week margarine supply in butter keeper.
Margarine	3 months	
Buttermilk	3-5 days	Cover tightly. Flavor not affected if buttermilk separates; re-mix before serving.
<b>Cheese</b>		
cottage, ricotta	5-7 days	Keep all cheese tightly packaged in moisture-resistant wrap. If outside of hard cheese gets moldy, just cut mold away — it won't affect flavor and will be safe to eat. For longer storage, see freezer storage chart.
cream, neufchatel	2 weeks	
hard and wax-coated		
cheddar, Edam, Gouda, Swiss, brick, etc.;		
large pieces		
unopened	3-6 months	
opened	3-4 weeks	
sliced	2 weeks	
Parmesan, Romano	2 months	
(grated and opened)		
Processed (opened)	3-4 weeks	Refrigerate after opening. (See Shelf Storage Chart.)
		Refrigerate slices of processed cheese and cheese food. Refrigerate loaves and jars after opening. Most squeeze packages and aerosol cans don't need refrigeration (check label).
Cream (light, heavy or half-and-half)	1 week	Cover tightly. To prevent bacteria from spreading into leftover cream, don't return unused cream to original container.
Coffee lightener, liquid	3 weeks	Don't return unused portion to original container.
<b>Dips, sour cream, etc.</b>		
commercial	2 weeks	Keep tightly covered.
homemade	2 days	Keep tightly covered.
<b>Eggs</b>		
in shell	6 months	Store covered. Keep small end down to center yolks.
whites	7 days	Store in covered container.
yolks	3 days	Cover unbroken yolks with water, store in covered container.
<b>Milk</b>		
evaporated (opened)	1 week	Keep covered.
homogenized, reconstituted	1 week	Keep containers tightly closed. Don't return unused milk to original container.
dry nonfat and skimmed		
sweetened and condensed (opened)	1 week	Keep covered.
Sour cream	2 weeks	Keep covered.
<b>Whipped topping</b>		
in aerosol can	3 months	
prepared from mix	3 days	Keep covered.
bought frozen (once thawed)	2 weeks	Keep covered.
Yogurt	7-10 days	Keep covered.



## FRUITS AND VEGETABLES - FRESH

### Fruit

bananas	3-5 days	Refrigerate only when fully ripe. Discard bruised or decayed fruit. Don't wash before storing. Store in crisper or moisture-resistant bag or wrap.
apples	1 month	
berries, cherries	2-3 days	
citrus fruit	2 weeks	
Citrus juice (bottled, reconstituted, frozen or canned)	6 days	
Melons	1 week	Keep fruit juice tightly covered. Transfer canned juice to glass or plastic container. Wrap cantaloupe and honeydew to prevent odor from spreading to other foods in refrigerator.
Other	3-5 days	Wrap cut surfaces of citrus fruit and cantaloupe to prevent vitamin loss.
<b>Vegetables</b>		
asparagus, corn in husks	1-2 days	Keep moist; refrigerate. Keep in crisper or moisture-resistant wrap or bag.
beans, green or wax	1-2 days	
beets, carrots and radishes	1-2 days	Remove leafy tops; keep in crisper. Keep in crisper or moisture-resistant wrap or bag.
cabbage and celery	1-2 weeks	
lettuce, head (unwashed)	5-7 days	Store in moisture-resistant wrap, bag or lettuce keeper. Store away from other vegetables.
lettuce, head (washed and thoroughly drained)	3-5 days	
mushrooms	1-2 days	Do not wash before storing. Refrigeration not needed. (See Shelf Storage Chart.)
onions, potatoes and sweet potatoes	1-2 days	
shredded cabbage, leaf or Bibb lettuce and salad greens	1-2 days	Keep in moisture-resistant wrap or bag.
tomatoes, ripe	1-2 days	
unshelled peas, limas and spinach	3-5 days	Ripen tomatoes at room temperature away from direct sunlight; then refrigerate. Keep in crisper or moisture-resistant wrap or bag.

## MEAT, FISH AND POULTRY - FRESH, UNCOOKED

### Meats: beef, lamb, pork and veal

chops	2-5 days	Store meat, poultry and fish in retail packages or wrap loosely in waxed paper (except fish). Store in coldest part of refrigerator.
ground meat	1-2 days	
roasts	2-5 days	
steaks	2-5 days	
stew meat	1-2 days	
variety meats (liver, heart, etc.)	1-2 days	
<b>Poultry</b>		
ready-to-cook chicken, duck or turkey	2 days	
<b>Fish and shellfish</b>		
Fresh cleaned fish, including steaks and fillets	2 days	
<b>Seafood including shucked clams, oysters, scallops and shrimp</b>		
Clams, crab and lobster in shell	2 days	Cook only live lobster.

## CURED AND SMOKED MEATS

Bacon	5-7 days	Keep wrapped. Store in coldest part of refrigerator or in meat keeper. Times are for opened packages of sliced meats. Unopened vacuum packs keep about 2 weeks.
Bologna loaves, liverwurst	4-5 days	
Corned beef	5-7 days	
Dried beef	10-12 days	
Dry and semi-dry sausage (salami, etc.)	14-21 days	
Frankfurters	1 week	

# REFRIGERATOR STORAGE

## FOOD

STORAGE TIME  
at 34-40 degrees F or 1-3 degrees C.

## HANDLING HINTS

### Hams

whole  
canned (unopened)

1 week  
6 months

Store in refrigerator unless label indicates refrigeration is not needed.

Liver sausage  
Luncheon meats  
Sausage, fresh or smoked

4-5 days  
3-5 days  
1-2 days

## OTHER FOODS

### Canned goods

fruits (opened)  
vegetables (opened)

1 week  
2-3 days

If not used in 1 day, transfer to glass or plastic container to avoid metallic taste. Cover and refrigerate.

puddings, custards (opened)  
Leftover gravy and broth

1-2 days  
2 days

Keep covered.  
Keep covered.

Refrigerated biscuits, rolls, pastries and cookie dough

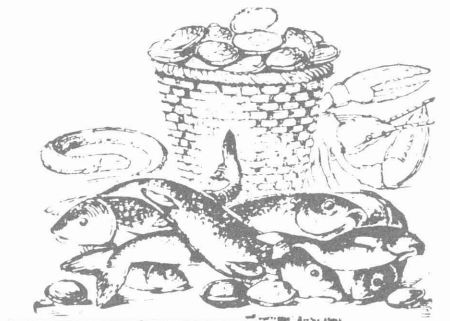
Expiration date on label

Don't store in refrigerator door; temperature fluctuation and jarring lower quality.

Mayonnaise (opened)  
Nuts

3 months  
6 months

*Refrigerate.*  
Store in moisture-vapor-proof wrap.



# FREEZER STORAGE

The best temperature for frozen foods storage is at 0 degrees F or -17 degrees C. The temperature should not reach higher than 5 degrees F or -15 degrees C. Check the temperature with a thermometer, or use this rule

of thumb: If the freezer can't keep ice cream brick-solid, the temperature is above the recommended level.

The freezing compartments of some home refrigerators are not designed to give a temperature of 0 degrees F or -17 degrees C, the temperature needed for prolonged storage of frozen foods. Hold frozen foods in these compartments only a few days. In refrigerator freezers where temperature can be maintained at 0 degrees F or -17 degrees C in the freezer cabinet, food may be kept for the same storage periods as in a freezer.

Date food packages with an "expiration date" according to maximum storage time recommended if they are not date coded. Longer storage is not dangerous, but flavors and textures deteriorate.

Package frozen foods in moisture-vapor-proof packages or freezer containers. Store packaging may not be moisture-vapor-proof. Holes in freezer packages cause freezer burn.

When shopping, pick up frozen foods just before going to the checkout counter. Purchase only the foods that are frozen solid. Place them in the home freezer as soon as possible. Cook or thaw according to label instructions.

Place foods to be frozen in the coldest part of the freezer. Freeze no more than three pounds per cubic foot of freezer space within 24 hours. Keep the freezer full for best results. Also keep a written inventory of freezer contents.

FOOD	STORAGE TIME 0 degrees F or -17 degrees C.	HANDLING HINTS
<b>MEAT, HOME FROZEN</b>		
Bacon (A)		A. Freezing cured meats is not recommended. Added salt encourages rancidity. If frozen, use within a month.
Corned beef (A)		
Frankfurters (B)	2 weeks	
Ground beef, lamb and veal (C)	2-3 months	B. Freezing is not recommended. Emulsion may be broken and product will "weep."
Ground pork (C)		
Ham and picnic, cured (A)		
Luncheon meat (B)		
Roasts		C. Check for holes in trays and plastic wrap of fresh meat. If none, freeze in this wrap up to 2 weeks. For longer storage, seal in package. Put two layers of waxed paper between individual hamburger patties.
beef	6-12 months	
lamb	6-12 months	
veal	4-8 months	
pork	4-8 months	
Sausage, dry, smoked (A)		
Sausage, fresh, unsalted	2-3 months	
Steaks and chops (C)		
beef	6-12 months	
lamb	6-12 months	
veal	4-8 months	
pork	6-9 months	
Venison, game birds	8-12 months	
Fish, home frozen and purchased frozen fillets and steaks from "lean" fish: cod, flounder, haddock, sole, redfish, sheepshead	6 months	Same as meat, home frozen. Keep purchased frozen fish in original wrapping; thaw in refrigerator or in cold water. Follow cooking directions on label.
"Fatty" fish: bluefish, perch, mackerel, salmon	2-3 months	
Breaded fish	3 months	
Clams	3 months	
Cooked fish or seafood	3 months	
King crab	10 months	
Lobster tails	3 months	
Oysters	4 months	
Scallops	3 months	
Shrimp, uncooked	12 months	

# FREEZER STORAGE

FOOD	STORAGE TIME 0 degrees F or -17 degrees C.	HANDLING HINTS
Poultry, home frozen or purchased frozen		Same as meat, home frozen.
chicken, whole or cut up	9-12 months	
chicken livers	1-2 months	
cooked poultry	6 months	
duck and turkey	9-12 months	
frozen smoked turkey	6 months	
<b>FRUITS AND VEGETABLES</b>		
Fruit, home frozen or purchased frozen	12 months	Freeze in moisture-vapor-proof container.
berries, cherries, peaches pears, pineapple, etc.		
citrus fruit and juice		
frozen at home	6 months	
fruit juice concentrates	12 months	
Vegetables		Celery, salad greens and tomatoes do not freeze successfully.
home frozen	8 months	
purchased frozen: cartons, plastic bags or boiling bags	8 months	
<b>COMMERCIAL FROZEN FOODS</b>		
Also see: meats, fish and poultry; fruits and vegetables; dairy products.		
Baked goods		Freezing does not freshen baked goods. It can only maintain the quality (freshness) the food had before freezing.
yeast bread and rolls, baked	3 months	
rolls, partially baked	2-3 months	
bread, unbaked	1 month	
quick bread, baked	2-3 months	
cake, baked, unfrosted		
angel food	2 months	
chiffon, sponge	2 months	
cheese cake	2-3 months	
chocolate	4 months	
fruit cake	12 months	
yellow or pound	6 months	
cake, baked and frosted	8-12 months	
cookies, baked	8-12 months	
pie, baked	1-2 months	
fruit pie, unbaked	8 months	
Main dishes		
meat, fish, poultry pies and casseroles	3 months	
TV dinners: shrimp, ham, pork and frankfurter	3 months	
TV dinners: beef, turkey, chicken and fish	3 months	

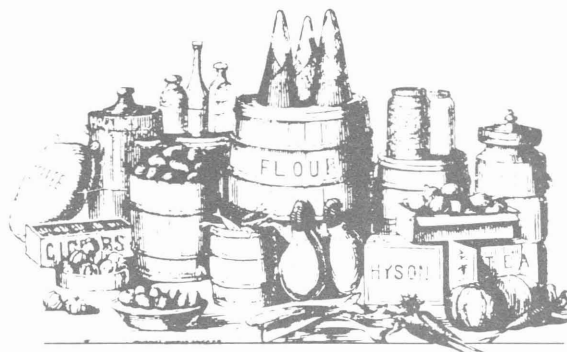
## DAIRY PRODUCTS

Butter	6 months	Store in moisture-vapor-proof freezer package.
Margarine	9 months	
Whipped butter and margarine		
Buttermilk, sour cream and yogurt		Do not freeze.
Cheese		
Camembert	3 months	Thaw in refrigerator.
cottage, farmer cheese (dry curd only)	3 months	Thaw in refrigerator. Do not freeze creamed cottage cheese — it gets mushy.
Neufchatel		Do not freeze.
Hard cheese		
cheddar	6 weeks	
Edam, Gouda, Swiss, brick, etc.	6-8 weeks	Cut and wrap cheese in small pieces. When frozen, may show mottled color due to surface moisture. Thaw in refrigerator.
Process cheese food products (loaf, slices)	4 months	Becomes crumbly after thawing. Still good for salads and melting.
Roquefort, blue		
Cream: light, heavy, half-and-half	2 months	Heavy cream may not whip after thawing. Use for cooking. Thaw in refrigerator.
whipped	1 month	Make whipped cream dollops; freeze firm. Place in pastic bag or carton; seal. Store in freezer. To thaw, place on top of dessert.
Eggs		
in shell		Do not freeze.
whites	12 months	Store in covered container. Freeze in amounts for specific recipes.
yolks	12 months	For sweet dishes, mix each cup yolks with 1 tablespoon corn syrup or sugar. For other cooking, substitute ½ teaspoon salt for sugar.
Ice cream, ice milk and sherbet	2 months	Cover with plastic wrap or foil after each use to prevent drying out.
Milk	1 month	Allow room for expansion in freezer container. Thaw in refrigerator. Freezing affects flavor and appearance. Use in cooking and baking.

## FROZEN FOODS

Also see: meats, fish and poultry; fruits and vegetables; dairy products. Store in moisture-vapor-proof materials.

Bread	3 months	Package foods tightly in moisture-vapor-proof wrap or watertight freezer containers. For casseroles, allow room for expansion during freezing.
Cake	3 months	
Casseroles: meat, fish and poultry	6 months	
Cookies, baked and dough	3 months	
Nuts		
salted	6-8 months	
unsalted	9-12 months	
Peanut butter		
unopened	1 year	
opened	6 months	
Pies, unbaked fruit	8 months	



This booklet was written by Marilyn Haggard,  
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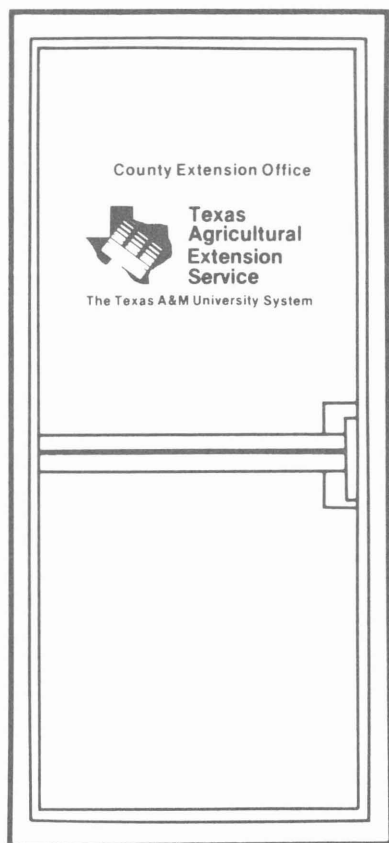
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