

How to Save Food After a Power Outage

Whether your freezer and refrigerator are shut off due to storm, forgetfulness or accident, the food safety rules about what to keep or toss are the same. Why not print this article and post it near your freezer and/or refrigerator for easy reference?

The Freezer

The basic rule is that if a food still has ice crystals inside its package, it can be refrozen. Use a permanent marker or crayon and mark each salvageable package in the freezer with a large “X” to indicate that it has been partially thawed. Use these items as soon as possible. Items with no remaining ice crystals should be thrown away.

What if the freezer has come back on and you don’t know how much your food has thawed? Since you are dealing with an unknown, the rule is “if in doubt, throw it out.” If you notice blood from once-frozen meat on neighboring packages or in the bottom of the freezer, advanced thawing has certainly occurred.

The Refrigerator

Since your refrigerator should be at or below 40 degrees F during normal operation, going two hours without power will mean you need to do some tossing. Follow these guidelines to help you salvage as much as possible.



Foods that need to be thrown away if kept above 40 degrees F for more than 2 hours:

- Raw or cooked meat, poultry, fish
- Hard cooked or cracked eggs
- Egg substitutes
- Milk, cream, yogurt, or soft cheese
- Casseroles, stews, or soups
- Lunch meats and hot dogs
- Cream-based salad dressings
- Custard, chiffon, or cheese pies
- Cream-filled pastries
- Cookie dough

Toss condiments, such as opened jars of mayonnaise, tartar sauce and horseradish, if they were above 50 degrees F for more than 8 hours.

Foods that can be kept at room temperature for a few days (throw away items that are moldy or have an unusual odor):

- Butter or margarine
- Spices
- BBQ sauce
- Fresh fruits and veggies
- Ketchup
- Fruit juices
- Relish
- Cakes without cream filling or cream cheese frosting
- Opened bottles of vinegar-based salad dressings
- Taco sauce
- Hard and processed cheese
- Fruit pies, bread, rolls or muffins
- Mustard
- Dried fruit, coconut
- Peanut butter
- Jelly

Reference: Susan Mills-Gray, Nutrition Specialist, Cass County Extension Center, University of Missouri Extension