

Thawing and Storing Meats Safely

Buying meats in bulk is a great cost-effective shopping method, freezing a portion of those meats will extend the time you are able to use them! Once it comes time to cook the frozen protein, proper thawing and storage methods must be used to help prevent foodborne illness.

Do's and Don'ts of Thawing Raw Meats

Do:	Don't:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use the Refrigerator: Place frozen foods in a leak proof, sealed container to prevent leaking juices and cross contamination. Place in the refrigerator for 24 hours or until completely thawed• Thaw in Cold Water: Submerge frozen foods in a leak proof plastic bag or packaging into cold water. Change the water every 30 minutes until the food is completely thawed• Utilize your Microwave: The microwave is the quickest way to thaw your food when you are running short on time. Place food in a microwave safe container and follow your microwave manufacturer's directions for thawing food or use the "defrost" button. Flip the food halfway through for even thawing.• Cook immediately after thawing if the cold water or microwave method were used to thaw the meat. Foods should only be refrozen or stored in the refrigerator after the item has been cooked.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thaw your food in the sun or outdoors• Place your food on the counter, in the garage, or in the basement to defrost• Use hot or warm water to thaw food 

Tip: Wrap your meats in plastic wrap before placing in a freezer bag, press out the air and store in the coldest area of the freezer to prevent freezer burn.

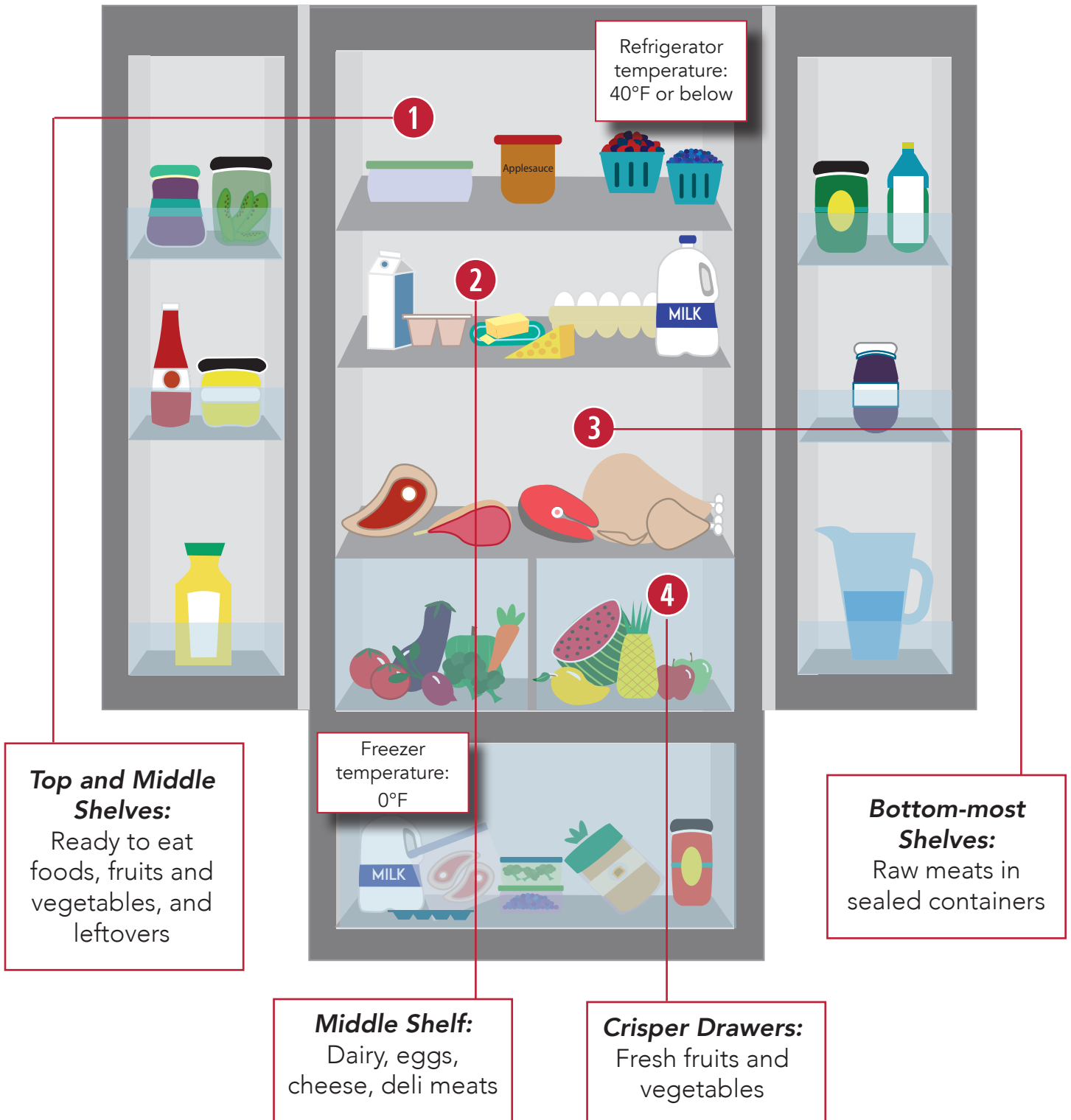
Always label and date all your food before storing in the freezer!



Raw Meat Storage

Keeping your refrigerator and freezer at the proper temperature protects against bacteria that can cause food poisoning.

Food should be stored in the following order to prevent cross-contamination:



Storage Times for Common Foods

Category	Food	Refrigerator	Freezer
Salads	Egg, chicken, ham, tuna, and macaroni salads	3 to 5 days	Does not freeze well
Hot Dogs	Opened Package	1 week	1 to 2 months
	Unopened Package	2 weeks	1 to 2 months
Luncheon Meat	Opened Package or Deli Sliced	3 to 5 days	1 to 2 months
	Unopened Package	2 weeks	1 to 2 months
Bacon and Sausage	Bacon	7 days	1 month
	Sausage, raw - from chicken, turkey, pork, or beef	1 to 2 days	1 to 2 months
Hamburger and Other Ground Meat	Hamburger, ground beef, turkey, veal, pork, lamb, or mixtures of them	1 to 2 days	3 to 4 months
Fresh Beef, Veal, Lamb & Pork	Steaks	3 to 5 days	6 to 12 months
	Chops	3 to 5 days	4 to 6 months
	Roasts	3 to 5 days	4 to 12 months
Fresh Poultry	Chicken or turkey, whole	1 to 2 days	1 year
	Chicken or turkey, pieces	1 to 2 days	9 months
Soups and Stews	Vegetable or meat added	3 to 4 days	2 to 3 months
Leftovers	Cooked meat or poultry	3 to 4 days	2 to 6 months
	Chicken nuggets or patties	3 to 4 days	1 to 3 months
	Pizza	3 to 4 days	1 to 3 months

Cooking Meats

Meats should be cooked to a minimum internal temperature depending on type and cut. To check the temperature, insert an instant read thermometer into the thickest portion of the meat and wait until a stable reading.

Product	Minimum Internal Temperature & Rest Time
Beef, Pork, Veal and Lamb <i>Steaks, chops, roasts</i>	145 °F (62.8 °C) and allow to rest for at least three minutes
Ground Meats	160 °F (71.1 °C)
Ham <i>Fresh or smoked (uncooked)</i>	145 °F (62.8 °C) and allow to rest for at least three minutes
Fully Cooked Ham <i>(to reheat)</i>	Reheat cooked hams packaged in USDA-inspected plants to 140 °F (60 °C) and all others to 165 °F (73.9 °C).
All Poultry <i>Breasts, whole bird, legs, thighs, wings, ground poultry, and stuffing</i>	165 °F (73.9 °C).
Fish and Shellfish	145 °F (62.8 °C)
Eggs	160 °F (71.1 °C)



Sources: https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/safe-food-handling/safe-minimum-internal-temperature-chart/ct_index and <https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/charts/storagetimes.html>

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English. To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov. This institution is an equal opportunity provider. (11/2015)