

POPSUGAR.

Your Leftovers Don't Last as Long in the Fridge as You Might Think

Andi Breitowich | December 9, 2022



Picture this: you make a stunning dinner and have tons of leftovers, and now your refrigerator is fully stocked. Except, the countdown clock is on, and you're wondering, "How will I eat all of this before it starts to go bad?" In this scenario, knowing how long cooked food lasts in the fridge is key. The info will help you make a plan for your leftovers, eating up or freezing the foods with a shorter lifespan first, then moving onto the more stable dishes.

First up, some food-storage safety tips. Generally speaking, all raw or cooked food needs to be put in the refrigerator or freezer within two hours of being cooked to prevent foodborne illness, says Kim Shapira, RD, a registered dietitian and nutritional coach at [Trimly](#). But aim to store it away ASAP. The longer it sits out, the higher chance it has for growing harmful bacteria that can make you sick, Shapira says. (Oh, and the idea that you shouldn't put hot foods directly in the fridge? A myth, according to the Washington State Department of Health.) Bonus tip: to "seal in its freshness," Shapira suggests storing leftovers in an airtight glass container.

Once you've sealed and stored your cooked food correctly, here's exactly how long common foods last in the fridge and freezer before you should bid it farewell, for safety's sake. (All the food guidelines here come from FoodSafety.gov and the United States Department of Agriculture.) Of course, if anything doesn't pass the sniff test *before* any of these guidelines, go ahead and toss it — but for the most part, your leftovers should be safe within these windows.

Poultry

How Long Does Cooked Chicken Last in the Fridge?

Consume cooked chicken within three to four days while storing in the fridge, or keep in the freezer for up to four months. Raw chicken is safe for one to two days in the fridge, but up to nine months or a year in the freezer.

How Long Does Turkey Last in the Fridge?

Raw turkey (whole or cut into pieces) lasts one to two days in the fridge, but if fully cooked and stashed in the fridge, eat within three to four days. If frozen, raw turkey can last for up to a year when whole or nine months when cut into pieces.

Red Meat

How Long Does Ground Beef Last In the Fridge?

Cooked ground beef should be thrown away after three to four days in the refrigerator. It's best to cook and eat your raw ground beef within one to two days when storing in the fridge, but it can last up to three or four months in the freezer.

How Long Does Bacon Last In the Fridge?

Bacon can last in the fridge for up to one week, but if kept in the freezer it's safe for one month.

How Long Does Pork Last in the Fridge?

Raw pork is safe for three to five days in the fridge but can stay fresh for four to 12 months in the freezer. Cooked, refrigerated pork should be used within three to four days.

How Long Does Beef Last In the Fridge?

Steak, chops, and roasts are okay in the fridge for three to five days when they're raw, but can last four to 12 months in the freezer. If your beef is fully cooked and refrigerated, consume within three to four days.

Fish

How Long Does Salmon Last in the Fridge?

Salmon is good in the fridge for one to three days, but up to three months when stored in the freezer.

How Long Does Fish Last In the Fridge?

Most other raw fish will last in the fridge for one to three days, like salmon. But if fully cooked, all fish should be eaten within three to four days. Fatty fish such as catfish, mackerel, and tuna are safe for two to three months in the freezer, while lean fish such as cod, halibut, ocean perch, sea trout, and pollock are good for four to eight months when frozen.

Lunch Meats

How Long Does Deli Meat Last in the Fridge?

If the package is opened or deli-sliced, it's good in the refrigerator for three to five days, but unopened and unsliced deli meat is safe for up to two weeks. In the freezer (opened or unopened), deli meat can last one to two months.

How Long Does Ham Last In the Fridge?

The freshness of ham depends on how it's prepared.

- Fresh, uncured, uncooked ham is safe for three to five days in the fridge but up to six months in the freezer.
- Fresh, uncured, cooked ham is safe for three to four days in the fridge, and three to four months in the freezer.
- Cured, uncooked ham is safe for five to seven days in the fridge (or by the "use by" date), and three to four months in the freezer.
- Fully cooked, vacuum-sealed, and unopened ham is good for two weeks in the fridge (or by the "use by" date), and one to two months in the freezer.
- A cooked, store-wrapped, whole ham is safe for one week in the fridge but one to two months in the freezer.
- Cooked, store-wrapped slices or spiral cut ham is good for three to five days in the fridge but one to two months in the freezer.
- Cooked country ham is safe for one week in the fridge and one month in the freezer.
- Prosciutto or dry Italian ham is safe for two to three months in the fridge and one month in the freezer.

Pizza

How Long Does Pizza Last in the Fridge?

Leftover pizza is safe for three to four days in the fridge, but if for some reason you don't gobble up all the leftovers by then, it'll be good for up to two months in the freezer.

Eggs and Dairy

How Long Do Eggs Last in the Fridge?

Raw eggs are safe in the fridge for three to four weeks, but should *not* be frozen in the shell. Hard-boiled eggs can be preserved for up to seven days in the fridge, but make sure to keep the shells on to ward off bacteria and prevent odors from absorbing into the egg. Hard boiled eggs should *not* be frozen.

How Long Does Dairy Last In the Fridge?

Yogurt can be stored in the fridge for one to two weeks, or one to two months if kept in the freezer. Soft cheeses such as cottage cheese, ricotta, or Brie can be refrigerated for up to one week but should not be frozen. Hard cheese like cheddar, Swiss, and Parmesan can last up to six months when unopened, three to four weeks once opened, and up to six months if frozen. Processed cheese slices should not be frozen but can last one to two months in the refrigerator.

How Long Does Ice Cream Last In the Fridge?

Little-known fact: Ice cream does not last forever, so eat within six weeks after opening. If unopened, ice cream will last up to three months.

Image Source: Getty / Martin Poole

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