

Meal Prep and Food Safety After a Power Failure

To prepare food without power or safe water, follow these guidelines.

Keeping Frozen Foods

- Full freezers stay colder longer. Packing freezers with ice and keeping the door closed can help keep food cold.
- Foods are still safe to eat as long as they stay at or below 41 degrees F
- Foods that stayed below 41 degrees F can be safely refrozen. However, the quality may change.
- Check temperatures with a tip-sensitive thermometer.
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Cooking without Power

- Use an outdoor grill, fireplace, camp stove or charcoal burner.
- Choose foods that cook quickly. Avoid frozen foods because they require more heat and cooking time than shelf-stable foods.
- Eat commercially packaged foods straight from the container.

Cooking Without Safe Water

- Substitute canned stocks/broths or liquids from canned fruits, vegetables for water.
- Clear water from questionable sources should be brought to a rolling boil for 1 minute and cooled before use. Cloudy water should be filtered before boiling.
- Water can be treated with unscented bleach. For clear water, add 1/8 teaspoon bleach per gallon. Allow to stand for 30 minutes before drinking or using for cooking.

No Power for Refrigeration

- If without refrigeration, only open enough cans or jars of food for one meal as leftover food in jars and cans cannot be saved.
- Prepare and eat foods in their original containers
- If necessary, substitute canned and powdered milk for fresh milk.
- Leafy greens, tomatoes, and melons should be eaten within 4 hours of being cut or throw away

Cooking Food Safely

- Never use outdoor grills or burners inside your home, even in a fireplace. Fumes from grills and camping stoves can be deadly.
- Never use lighter fluid in a fireplace, as flames can cause damage to the home.
- When cooking, heat foods to the following internal temperatures for food safety: eggs, whole meats, fish; 145 degrees F, ground meats; 155 degrees F, whole and ground poultry; 165 degrees F.
- Floodwater can bring silt, raw sewage, oil, and chemicals into your kitchen and contaminate stored food making it unsafe to eat. Consider these recommendations for keeping food safe after the flood.

Throw Away or Keep Foods

Keep

- Foods that have not come in contact with flood water.
- Foods that are in waterproof containers or did not come in contact with flood waters.
- Canned foods that are not damaged or swollen.

Throw Away

- Raw and ready to eat foods that may have come in contact with flood water, including raw fruits and vegetables
- Food in non-waterproof containers that may have contacted floodwater, includes foods in cardboard or plastic wrap and/or with screw caps, snap lids, pull tops and crimped cans.
- Foods in cardboard boxes such as juice, milk, baby formula, as they cannot be sanitized.
- Canned foods with damage such as swelling, leakage, punctures, holes, fractures, extensive rusting or crushing/denting severe enough to prevent normal stacking or easy opening.
- Home canned foods that have come in contact with flood water.

Cleaning and Sanitizing Packaged Food

Foods in waterproof food storage containers or commercially prepared jars, cans, and retort pouches, that have contacted flood waters can be kept if they are properly cleaned and sanitized.

Follow these Steps:

- Remove labels and clean off dirt or silt using a clean brush or wipe
- Wash containers with soap and clean water
- Rinse containers with clean water
- Sanitize containers using one of the two methods
- Re-label containers with a marker and include the expiration date

Foods in these cleaned and sanitized containers should be used as quickly as possible.

Sanitizing methods

1. Make sanitizer solution by adding 1 cup of unscented household bleach to 5 gallons of water. Place containers in the solution for 15 minutes.
2. Bring a large pot of water to boil and submerge containers for 2 minutes.