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1997

**United States  
Department of  
Agriculture**



**National Agricultural Library**

# Take Out Foods

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**HANDLE  
WITH CARE**



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Food Safety  
and Inspection  
Service

## TAKE-OUT FOODS

**Cold Cut Platters  
Rotisserie Chicken  
Hamburgers  
Mexican Food  
Chinese Food  
Pizza...**

and many other convenience foods are experiencing runaway popularity with Americans.

Some are hot, and some are cold. Most are consumed immediately.

But there are times when take-out foods are purchased to eat at a later time. Or there may be leftovers which must be stored safely for future use.

Take-out foods are perishable and can cause illness when mishandled.

To keep hot food safe, hold above 140° F. Cold foods must be stored in the refrigerator at 40° F or below.



## **PURCHASED OR DELIVERED HOT**

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### **Eating Within Two Hours?**

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Pick up or receive the food HOT...and enjoy eating within two hours.

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### **Not Eating Within Two Hours?**

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Keeping food warm is not enough. Harmful bacteria can multiply between 40° and 140° F.

Set oven temperature high enough to keep the food at 140° F or above. Check internal temperature of food with a meat thermometer. Covering with foil will help keep your food moist.

You can also keep hot food hot (140° F or above) with chafing dishes or slow cookers that have been pre-heated.

*Remember to use a meat thermometer.*

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### **Eating Much Later?**

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It's not a good idea to try and keep the food hot longer than two hours. Food will taste better if you:

- Place in shallow containers, divide large quantities, cover loosely and refrigerate immediately.

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### **Reheating?**

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Reheat thoroughly to a temperature of 165° F or until hot and steaming. In the microwave oven, cover food and rotate so it heats evenly. Allow a two minute stand time for more thorough heating.

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***Consult your microwave owner's manual for recommended times and power levels. Inadequate heating can contribute to illness.***

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## **PURCHASED OR DELIVERED COLD**

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### **Keep Cold Food Cold.**

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Refrigerate immediately. Cold food should be held at 40° F or colder.

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### **The Two Hour Rule**

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Perishable food should not be at room temperature longer than two hours. Discard food which has been left at room temperature longer than two hours. For temperatures over 90° F, discard after one hour.

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### **Deli Platters**

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Keep food cold on the buffet table by nesting dishes in bowls of ice. Use small platters of food, and replace them with fresh platters, rather than adding fresh food to a dish that already had food on it.

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### **Picnics**

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When take-out food is purchased cold to eat at a later time, like a picnic or a sporting event, a cooler with ice is a practical alternative to a refrigerator. The cooler should be well insulated and packed with ice, or freezer packs.

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**“IF IN DOUBT  
THROW IT OUT”**







# WHAT TO DO WITH THOSE LEFTOVERS!

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## Food Storage Guidelines

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- Perishable food should not be out of the refrigerator for more than two hours.
- Refrigerate or freeze leftovers promptly in shallow covered containers.

It is safe to freeze leftover take-out. Wrap tightly for best quality.

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## Storage in the refrigerator

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40° F or below

Cooked meat or poultry .....	3 to 4 days
Fried chicken.....	3 to 4 days
Pizza.....	3 to 4 days

Deli prepared convenience .....3 to 5 days  
foods such as egg, tuna, and  
macaroni salads

Deli sliced luncheon meats.....3 to 5 days

*Foods stored longer may begin to spoil  
or become unsafe to eat.*

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## Storage in the freezer

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0° F or below

Cooked meat or poultry .....	3 to 6
dishes	months
Fried chicken.....	4 months
Deli sliced luncheon meats.....	1 to 2
	months
Deli prepared.....	3 to 4
convenience foods	months

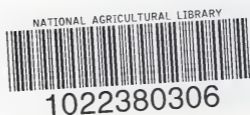
(Salads made with mayonnaise do not freeze well)

*Foods kept frozen longer than recommended times are safe, but may be drier and may not taste as good.*

**For more information about food safety,  
call USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline:**

**1-800-535-4555**

10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Eastern time,  
Monday through Friday  
In the Washington, D.C. area, call  
**(202) 720-3333.**



**Developed by:**

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