

Perishable Food Decision Tables

Many emergency feeding programs receive foods that must be frozen or refrigerated perishable foods. These foods can quickly become hazardous or lose quality if the temperature is not maintained appropriately. Use the following tables to help you determine the safety of perishable foods your program receives or stores.

1) Frozen Foods

Type of Food	Partially Frozen (some ice crystals)	Thawed -still cold (below 40°F)	Thawed -warm (above 40°F)
Meats	refreeze	cook and serve or cook and refreeze	discard
Poultry	refreeze	cook and serve or cook and refreeze	discard
Organ Meats	use within 48 hours; do NOT refreeze	cook and serve	discard
Fish and Shellfish	refreeze	cook and serve or cook and refreeze	discard
Combination Dishes (stews, casseroles, etc.)	cook and serve or cook and refreeze*	cook and serve	discard
Dairy Items	refreeze	refreeze or refrigerate	discard
Produce	refreeze	cook and serve or cook and refreeze	discard
Juices	refreeze	refreeze	discard
Baked Goods	refreeze	refreeze	serve

*Refreeze only those dishes containing raw ingredients. Do not refreeze previously cooked dishes.

2) Refrigerated Foods

Food	Action
Milk	Discard if held above 40° F for more than two hours.
Fruit Juices	Generally safe unrefrigerated for short periods, but discard if cloudy, moldy, or fermented.
Eggs (fresh or hard boiled)	Discard if held above 40° F for more than two hours.
Hard cheese, butter, or margarine	Generally safe unrefrigerated if well-wrapped, but discard if mold or rancid odor develops.
Soft cheeses	Discard if held above 40°F for more than two hours.
Fresh fruits and vegetables	Generally safe unrefrigerated, but discard if mold, yeasty odor, or slimy texture develop.
Fresh meats and poultry	Discard if held above 40°F for more than two hours.
Lunch meats and hot dogs	Discard if held above 40°F for more than two hours.
Mayonnaise	Discard if held above 40°F for more than two hours.

3) Prepared Foods Discard prepared foods that are between 50°F and 135°F. Be sure to take the temperature at the edge of the package where it will cool down or warm up first.