

Is This Food Still Safe to Eat?

I frequently get food safety questions and today I would like to share with you some of the most common ones.

Is it safe to use food from dented cans? If a can containing food has a small dent, but is otherwise in good shape, the food should be safe to eat. Discard deeply dented cans. A deep dent is one that you can lay your finger into. Deep dents often have sharp points. A sharp dent on either the top or side seam can damage the seam and allow bacteria to enter the can. Discard any can with a deep dent on any seam.

Is it safe to use food from rusted cans? Discard heavily rusted cans. Cans that are heavily rusted can have tiny holes in them, allowing bacteria to enter. Surface rust that you can remove by rubbing with your finger or paper towel is not serious. You can keep these canned foods. If you open the cans and there is any rust inside, do not eat the food. Rust (oxidized iron) is not safe to eat.

How can you tell if food is safe after a power outage? Keep the freezer door closed to keep cold air inside. Don't open the door any more than necessary. A full freezer will stay at safe temperatures about 2 days; a half-full freezer about 1 day. If your freezer is not full group packages so they form an Aigloo@ to protect each other. If you think the power will be out for several days, try to find some dry ice. Keep dry ice wrapped and do not touch it with your bare hands. Use cubed ice or block ice in the refrigerator.

Even if food has started to thaw, foods can be safely kept in the freezer. The foods in your freezer that partially or completely thaw before power is restored may be safely refrozen if they still contain ice crystals or are 40F or below. You will have to evaluate each item separately. When in doubt, throw it out.

In general, refrigerated items should be safe up to 4 hours. Keep the door closed as much as possible. Discard any perishable foods (such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and leftovers) that have been above 40F for 2 hours or more. Also discard any other food that has a unusual odor, color, or texture, or feels warm to the touch.

Keep an appliance thermometer in the refrigerator and freezer at all times. This will remove the guesswork of just how cold the unit is because it will give you the exact temperature. The key to determining the safety foods in the refrigerator and freezer is knowing how cold they are. The refrigerator temperature should be at 40F or below; the freezer, 0F or lower.