

Title:

Storing Food - The Basics

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1301

Summary:

This article covers sweet and simple methodologies to store fruits, vegetables, meats, dry goods, herbs, and spices. It also talks about straightforward explanations for why the methodologies work explaining the purpose and principle behind the action. Thus this article empowers the cook to keep food fresher longer, not binding them to silly rules or heresy.

Keywords:

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Article Body:

In The Refrigerator

Foods stored in the refrigerator or freezer should be in excellently wrapped packaging such as cellophane and tin foil or in sealed containers such as zip lock bags and plastic bowls with lids and locking mechanisms. A pad lock is suggested to keep kids and spouses out of your favorite ice creams. The main point is that the food is sealed; nothing gets in nothing gets out.

Food sealed effectively preserves flavor and moisture also thwarting any attempts of other foods with dripping juices and stronger aromas seeping out and transferring into dishes they are not meant to be in. Not to mention making a refrigerator much fresher and easier to clean.

It is crucial to keep raw meats and poultry sealed as best as possible due to their tendency to drip and seep bacteria into foods not intended for cooking or even your leftovers. This can cause a common illness called "food poisoning".

Perishable foods should be kept at a temperature of 35 to 40 degrees Fahrenheit to maximize freshness. These foods include but are not limited to all meats (beef, pork, poultry, fresh water fish and seafood), eggs, all dairy products (milk, cheese, yogurt, etc.), most fruits, and most vegetables.

Why does cooling or refrigerating help preserve foods? Well the basic science is

simple. Temperature is a measurement which tells us how fast molecules are moving. The refrigerator is a tool which slows the molecules in food thus decreasing the rate at which the food spoils. The warmer the food is the faster the rate of spoilage, which is why freezing our food is so advantageous. Freeze foods at temperatures lower than zero degrees Fahrenheit for longer storage periods.

Conversely, Cryopathy or the "destruction of tissue by freezing" is where the molecules in living matter such as meat slow down so much that they lose their molecular cohesiveness and break down. This is what occurs when something decays. Thus frost burn on meat or any food is actually frozen decay, icky, don't eat it.

However, refrigerator companies still see no reason to integrate a thermometer, allowing us to tell what temperature our food is at. They instead use this dial with a number or a red and blue image indicating colder or hotter. The dial only controls the refrigeration of the food and does not tell us what temperature the refrigerator is at.

Consequently whether storing, preparing, or serving your food it is essential to keep it at the correct temperature. Get your self a nice freezer and refrigerator thermometer. Don't be weird about the temperature of your food just keep on eye things. You'll notice that because the refrigerator is controlled by a dial it refrigerates at that same rate no matter what how cold or hot it may really be inside of the refrigerator, thus in the winter you may need to turn your dial down in order to not freeze your milk.

Storing Fresh Fruits

Fruits that can be stored at room temperature while ripening include but are not limited to apricots, kiwi, mangoes, nectarines, papayas, peaches, pears, pineapples, and plums. Once they have ripened refrigerate and eat within 2-3 days for maximum freshness.

Apples stored in a refrigerator stay crisper longer however they can be stored at a cool room temperature. Other fruits that can be stored at a cool room temperature include bananas, dates, lemons, limes, grapefruit, and oranges. Apples can be kept at this temperature for a few days, citrus fruits up to a week, and dates for several weeks, any longer than that toss them in your refrigerator.

Fruits purchased while ripe include but are not limited to berries, cherries, figs, grapes, melons, pomegranates, and tangerines. These should be refrigerated

and eaten in about 2 to 3 days. Pomegranates seem to last longer but don't wait too long they can be expensive.

Storing Fresh Vegetables

Many vegetables can be stored at room temperature or in the refrigerator. Yet the ideal for many vegetables is in a dark cool ventilated room at a temperature of 50 degrees Fahrenheit. These veggies include chayote, garlic, onion, potato and sweet potato, rutabaga and winter squash. These vegetables can be kept in this environment for about 2 months.

Remember that technically a tomato is a fruit not a vegetable, despite what it tastes like or what type of plant it grows on. Tomatoes should be ripened at room temperature then refrigerated.

Some vegetables spoil faster than others and should be refrigerated; peas and corn should be eaten as soon as possible while carrots and cabbage can be stored for longer. In most cases do not wash the vegetable until you are ready to serve and eat it, this prevents mold and rot. However, celery, curly endive, escarole, hearty greens, herbs, lettuce, spinach and watercress should be washed before storage.

Storing Canned and Dry Foods

Having a full pantry can be fun and reassuring. Yet keeping your canned and dry goods past their date of expiration or even past their freshness date can be bad when cooking for taste and nutrition. These foods should be kept in a cool dry cabinet no warmer than 65 degrees Fahrenheit. Indispensable items such as flour, salt, sugar, pasta, and grains should be sealed in humidity proof containers.

Further more moving these items to puncture and spill proof containers such as jars and plastic bins can greatly improve organization and make cleaning your cabinets much easier. Refined grains tend to last longer than whole-grain items do, so keep an eye on your whole-wheat flour and brown rice, perhaps in see through containers.

To add protein to your diet open all your bags and boxes of dry goods. Wait bug hovel saturation to peak then cook and serve, yummy! There is nothing like whole wheat pancakes and some sweet little bugs.

Dried spices and herbs keep their value to your cooking endeavors better in tightly sealed jars. Light is there enemy store your precious herbs in a dark place in a dark sealed jar, glass or ceramic if possible. Oils are the same way

except make sure they are airtight and spill proof, a cooler place than the herbs and spices is more desirable for oils. Nut oils can be preserved longer if refrigerated.

Storing Fresh Herbs and Spices

Fresh is better than dried in my opinion and should be used whenever possible. Their scent and color can make all the difference in an ordinary dish that you have become board with. Many herbs can be grown at home in a pot on your window seal and have become easier to find at niche grocery stores and even supermarkets.

Fresh herbs are quicker to expel their flavor than dried herbs thus they should be chopped just before using and added to hot dishes towards the end of cooking. Some herbs you should not chop or cut, such as a bay leaf, these are so potent that it may be detrimental to your meal if you did chop it up, not to mention hard to chew and swallow. Many people even take herbs like this out of the soups so as not to have it accidentally eaten by a naïve friend.

When substituting fresh with dry herbs and spices or vice versa us the ratio of 1 teaspoon dried to 1 tablespoon fresh.

Though herbs are quick to impart their flavor spices are a different story. Spices typically need a longer amount of time to pass on their flavor and aroma. So follow the recipe directions and use your experience and knowledge to know when the directions are flawed or incomplete when adding the spices. Spices should be ground freshly just using a spice mill, nutmeg grater, or even a mortar and pestle. You will find an amazingly distinct difference in pre-ground and freshly ground spices.