Cool Refrigerator Storage Tips

Preserving perishable foods at their freshest and keeping them food safe are common concerns among consumers. Proper refrigeration is one of the most effective ways to do this. Following these basic refrigerator storage guidelines can help prolong the quality and safety of your perishable food items.

Temperature

Set your refrigerator to a temperature of 40°F or less. A temperature of 40°F or below is important because it slows the growth of most bacteria. The temperature won’t kill the bacteria, but it will keep them from multiplying quickly.

Storage

Raw meat, poultry and seafood should be kept in their original store wrapping, and stored in the refrigerator meat compartment or on a plate on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator. This will prevent their juices from dripping onto other foods.

Fruits and Vegetables

Produce drawers provide the best storage place for fruits and vegetables. Temperature and humidity are regulated in these drawers to keep produce fresher longer.

Eggs and Milk

Don’t store eggs or milk on the refrigerator door. They will last longer if they are kept in their carton on an inner shelf. The temperature on the door shelves fluctuates more than the temperature on the inside of the refrigerator.

What about leftovers?

After a meal, hot foods should be refrigerated as soon as possible, no more than two hours after cooking.

Before refrigerating:

Large pots of leftover soup or stew should be divided into small portions and put in shallow containers.

Large cuts of meat or whole poultry should be divided into smaller pieces and wrapped separately before refrigerating.

For longer storage, place in freezer bags/containers and label with name of product and date.

Remember…

Don’t over pack the refrigerator. Cool air must circulate to keep food at a safe temperature.

Clean the refrigerator regularly. Reduce the spread of bacteria by removing spoiled food. Wipe inside surfaces with warm water solution of milk detergent or baking soda; rinse; wipe dry.

When in doubt, throw it out!

A general rule of thumb for refrigerator storage for cooked leftovers is 4 days; raw poultry and ground meats, 1 to 2 days.

For more information on the storage life of individual foods in the refrigerator check “The Food Keeper” at http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/NEW/resources/FoodKeeper.pdf

Visit our nutrition Education for Wellness site: http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/NEW