

# USDA Freezing Guidelines: Quick Reference

## Freezing Basics

- Food stored at 0°F is safe indefinitely.
- Freeze early for better flavor and texture.
- Freezing slows but doesn't kill bacteria—handle thawed food like fresh.

## Thawing & Refreezing

- Thaw safely: in fridge, cold water, or microwave.
- Never thaw on counters or in warm areas.
- Refreezing is safe if thawed in the fridge (may lose quality).

## Preventing Freezer Burn

- Use airtight, freezer-safe containers or wrap tightly.
- Remove as much air as possible from packaging.
- Freeze items in a single layer first; stack once frozen.

## Freezer Storage Times (0°F)

- Uncooked roasts or poultry: 9–12 months
- Ground meat: 3–4 months
- Casseroles, soups, stews: 2–3 months
- Cooked meats or poultry: 2–4 months
- Bacon, sausage: 1–2 months

## Power Outage Tips

- Keep freezer closed—full freezers stay cold for ~2 days.
- If food has ice crystals and is 40°F or below, it is safe to refreeze.
- Discard anything warmer than 40°F for over 2 hours.