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How long to keep uncooked meat in freezer

So now you know that vapor compression is the principle behind the freezer. But how exactly does it work? At the core is a fast-moving stream of vaporized refrigerant that goes through a cycle inside the freezer.To get an idea of how it works, picture a river as it winds through the mountains and countryside en route to the ocean. Once it empties out, then it's taken up by clouds, turned into rain, and re-enters that river where it flows to the ocean again. Refrigerant flows and transforms from liquid to gas and back in a similar way.Today, some of the most commonly used refrigerants are HFCs (hydrofluorocarbons). Other refrigerants, such as CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons) and HCFCs (hydrochlorofluorocarbons) are highly regulated -- and banned from use in many products -- in the United States since they were contribute to depleting the atmospheric ozone layer [source: EPA].The refrigerant begins the cooling process as a vapor under low pressure. The first freezer component it enters is the compressor (usually found in the lower back of the freezer). The compressor squeezes the vapor's particles, which heats it up and converts it into a high-pressure state.The hot, pressurized refrigerant is pumped by the compressor through a tube into the next component called a condenser. If you've ever touched the outside of your freezer and felt warmth, that's the heat coming off the condenser coils, which usually sit underneath or at the bottom of the freezer, where they can be exposed to room temperature air and cooled down. As the vapor travels through the condenser coils, it loses the heat but retains its high pressure. It is also converted into a moderately warm temperature.The now-liquid refrigerant's inherent pressure pushes it through into the next component: the metering tube. This small structure regulates the vapor's pressure so it can head into the next component.As the liquid refrigerant heads from the small metering tube into the larger evaporator, its pressure drops suddenly, causing it to convert back into a low-pressure vapor. The evaporator also absorbs the heat, which leads to a freezing cold vapor that keeps the unit's temperature cold enough for freezing your food. The vapor then goes back to the compressor to begin the process anew.Vapor compression isn't the only way to create a super-cold food storage environment. On the next page, we'll talk about other freezing technologies and the different styles of freezers on the market today. In your home, you probably have a refrigerator/freezer combination unit. Whether you have a side-by-side fridge/freezer appliance, the kind with the freezer on top, or one with the freezer on the bottom, the differences are few. Each freezer is a single unit, so they all use the same machinery described earlier in the pursuit of vapor compression. About the only difference is energy efficiency. The bottom-mount uses the least amount of power [source: Hakim and Turiel]. Why? If the compressor is on the bottom, doesn't have to push vapor very far. On the side-by-side or top-freezer styles, the compressor has to force refrigerant through a tube to reach the freezer compartment.Another kind of freezer is the stand-alone, also called a "deep freeze" or "sub-zero," although the latter is a trademarked name for a specific brand of freezer. They, too, operate on the basic principles of vapor-compression.Have you ever worked in a restaurant and had to retrieve food from a large, walk-in commercial freezer? Again, these use vapor-compression; the only major benefit for this kind of unit is that many of them have reinforced aluminum floors which can hold up to 600 pounds (about 270 kilograms) of weight per square foot -- a very valuable concept in a high-volume restaurant (but which would be completely unnecessary for a family of four).Whatever kind of freezer you use, be sure to keep the temperature low and consistent. Otherwise, you'll get a buildup of a freezer's worst enemy: frost. On the next page, we'll take a look at how frost occurs and what you can do to prevent it. Aja Koska/Getty Images Canned food is easy to understand: It's good until its expiration date, simple as that. But not all food can be so low-maintenance--especially meat. Most of it keeps for a few days in the fridge, but when it comes time to store it in the freezer, things can get confusing fast. Before you freeze anything, though, it's imperative that perishable food stays at a temperature lower than 40°F when stored or higher than 140°F if it's being served hot, says Betty Feng, Ph.D., assistant professor of food science at Purdue University. Anything in between is known as the "danger zone," per the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), since bacteria grow most rapidly in that range of temperatures. "Leftovers can only stay on the counter for two hours before you have to put them in the refrigerator," Feng says. Make sure that any meats or prepared foods make it into the fridge within that timeframe.Now, when you're ready to start freezing meat, Feng says that the USDA's cold food storage chart is the best, most accessible resource for ensuring that you're keeping food at its peak quality. The chart recommends refrigeration and freezing guidelines for the most common types of meats and leftovers (yes, including your meat lover's pizza).So, how long is frozen meat good for?Technically, any food stored at 0°F will be "safe" indefinitely—but it has to be stored at 0°F consistently. However, the quality will suffer the longer it stays in the freezer. The meats with the most longevity include steaks, roasts, and a whole chicken or turkey, which can all last up to one year. On the other end of the spectrum, processed meats like bacon and hot dogs are the least freezer-friendly, staying good for only up to a month in the icebox. Check out the guidelines below: Bacon: 1 month Hot dogs: 1-2 months Lunch meat: 1-2 months Pizza: 1-2 months Sausage: 1-2 months Chicken nuggets or patties: 1-3 months Fatty fish (salmon, tuna, etc.): 2-3 months Soups and stews: 2-3 months Ground meat: 3-4 months Cooked meat or poultry: 2-6 months Lean fish (halibut, haddock, etc.): 6-8 months Chicken or turkey pieces: 9 monthsChops: 4-12 months Roasts: 4-12 months Steaks: 4-12 months Whole chicken or turkey: 1 yearBut why do certain foods only last for a certain time period—even when they're frozen? Blame it on bacteria. "Many people think, 'I put the food in the freezer, so the bacteria won't grow,'" Feng says. "That's the wrong perception because home freezing is usually not powerful enough to kill bacteria." The benefit of freezing is that low temperatures slow the growth of bacteria, making it safer than refrigeration over long periods of time. When anything comes out of the freezer, Feng advises to cook or reheat it to at least 165°F all the way through, which will make your meal safe to eat. You should also use a thermometer to make sure that your fridge is below 40°F and your freezer is at 0°F, according to Feng. Figuring out if something has been in the freezer for too long is deceptively hard, however. You can't rely on looks, smell, or even taste to determine if a frozen product has gone bad, Feng says. "The best practice is to write down when you put food in the refrigerator or freezer," she says, either by labeling food with a marker when it goes in or keeping a list nearby.Another tip from Feng: Print out the USDA's cold food storage chart and stick it your fridge so you'll never have to remember how long certain products last.Like what you just read? You'll love our magazine! Go here to subscribe. Don't miss a thing by downloading Apple News here and following Prevention. Oh, and we're on Instagram too. This content is created and maintained by a third party, and imported onto this page to help users provide their email addresses. You may be able to find more information about this and similar content at piano.io 1 How Much Money Is a Pound of \$20 Bills? 2 What Are the Advantages and Disadvantages of a Graph? 3 How Tall is 70 Inches and Other Measurement Systems and Conversions 4 The 30 Wealthiest Female Entertainers of 2019 5 What Is the Space-Time Continuum? 1 Mythology 101: A Basic History of Zeus the Greek God 2 Timing and More: Everything You Need to Know About Baking Chicken Breasts 3 What Are Some Examples of Moral Values? 4 How to Use Quizlet Live for Virtual Learning 5 Understanding SSI: Supplemental Security Income Basics for New Applicants You could say our freezers are stocked — stocked with booze, ice cream, and let's not forget our jeans when we want them clean without having to put them through the spin cycle. But that illusive frozen section of the refrigerator is actually useful when it comes to consuming more than just cocktails and dessert. In fact, it's extremely helpful with prepping and planning out meals in advance. Ahead, find 10 useful tips and tricks for your freezer that make a great case for putting some actual food in there. Freezing food will prevent it from going bad, but what is the optimum shelf life for frozen meats, veggies, fruits and other common foods? To avoid freezer burn and a general decline in quality, aim to buy only as much food as you can use in a reasonable amount of time. What's reasonable? It depends on the food. Read below for more details. Depending on the type of meat you're freezing (rabbit, pork, ham), it can last anywhere from one month to one year. See below for specifics. No matter the duration, you'll want to package your meat well. As a general rule, if you're planning to use it within a couple of months, simply place the meat in the freezer in its original packaging. If you are planning to freeze it for longer than a couple of months, you'll want to wrap it in another layer of aluminum foil or freezer paper or place the original contents in a sturdy zippered plastic bag. In either case, be sure to label the package as to its contents and the date it was frozen. Meat and Seafood Shelf Life Bacon 1-2 months Chicken or turkey, whole 1 year Chicken, pieces 9 months Chops (pork, veal, lamb) 4-12 months Fish 3-8 months Ground meats 3-4 months Ham 1-2 months Hot dogs 1-2 months Lunch Meat 3-4 months Organ meats 1-2 months Roast 4-12 months Sausage, smoked 1-2 months Sausage, uncooked 1-2 months Shellfish 3-12 months Steak 6-12 months Wild game, uncooked 8-12 months Sources: USDA, National Center for Food Preservation, Food Marketing Institute Freezing milk isn't common, but it's a perfectly safe way to preserve extra milk. Be sure to remove about a cup from a gallon container (or the equivalent from a smaller container) to allow for expansion as the liquid freezes. Buttermilk can be frozen in ice cube trays, as can cracked and beaten eggs. Hard and semi-hard cheese freeze well, unlike soft cheeses and cream cheese. Dairy Shelf Life Butter 6-9 months Buttermilk 3 months Cheese, hard 6 months Cheese, shredded 2-3 months Egg substitute 12 months Eggs shelled 12 months Ice cream 2-4 months Milk 3 months Sources: USDA, National Center for Food Preservation, Food Marketing Institute Generous leftovers from a nice meal are a shame to waste and very easy to preserve in your freezer. As with meat, you'll want to package everything carefully and tightly in close-fitting containers or plastic bags. Remember to label everything with a contents description and a date. Great candidates for freezing include soup, stews, casseroles, cooked meats and fish, and cooked beans, rice, and pasta. Dishes that won't fare well in the freezer include dairy-rich foods such as cream sauces and custards, as well as salads of any kind. Leftovers Shelf Life Broth 2-3 month Casseroles 2-3 months Chicken nuggets/patties 1-3 months Fish 3 months Gravy 2-3 month Meat or poultry 2-6 months Pasta 2 months Pizza 1-2 months Soups and stews 2-3 months Sources: USDA, National Center for Food Preservation, Food Marketing Institute Most baked goods freeze well, particularly if they are still fresh when popped into the freezer. A full (or nearly full) loaf of bread can be sliced before freezing, allowing you to remove just the number of slices desired. Put them right into the toaster. Wrapped well, unfrosted cakes stay fresh for up to four months. Cookies are also an excellent candidate for freezing. Baked Goods & Nuts Shelf Life Bread/rolls, unbaked 1 month Bread, baked 2-3 months Cake, baked (frosted) 1 month Cake, baked (unfrosted) 2-4 months Cookie dough 3 months Cookies, baked 6-12 months Pie, fruit (baked) 6-8 months Pie, fruit (unbaked) 2-4 months Pie, pumpkin 1-2 months Rolls, yeast 3-6 months Nuts, salted 6-8 months Nuts, unsalted 9-12 months Sources: USDA, National Center for Food Preservation, Food Marketing Institute Fresh, uncooked fruits and vegetables are excellent candidates for freezing. If they're frozen quickly, they retain many of their original nutrients. Frozen vegetables slip easily into soups and stews or right into a roasting pan alongside meat. Add frozen fruits directly to smoothies, sauces, and glazes. Fruits & Vegetables Shelf Life Fruits & Vegetables 8-12 months Sources: USDA, National Center for Food Preservation, Food Marketing Institute how long is it safe to keep uncooked meat in the freezer. how long can you keep uncooked meat in freezer. how long to keep raw meat in freezer

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