

What foods are safe after a power outage

Have you ever found yourself staring down the terrifying train of thought that screamed, “My power is out, and my food is perishable. How am I going to eat tonight?” I’m sure that many of us have, as unfortunate as that may be, and while these circumstances can often be stressful and anxiety ridden, it is important to keep calm and look at the facts.

Not ALL FOOD is perishable when without the cold from a refrigerator or freezer. In fact, there is a vast array of foods that can last days, if not weeks, past the point of a power outage that’s left your fridge down. The tricky thing is determining what is good to eat past a certain point, and what is not. With the following information, you can sleep better tonight knowing that, should there suddenly be a natural disaster, you wouldn’t go hungry. At least, not for awhile, eating just what you have stored up in your pantry.

Let’s start out with what a perishable food item is. It is something that can go bad in the sense that, while it still may be edible, it is quickly turning into an inedible, potentially harmful, product that no doubt will taste a little funny, if not disgusting. Most perishables are kept in the refrigerator, so when the power goes out, it is safe to say that the majority of the food in there will start to go bad.

Before we delve into a list of what types of food turn bad without refrigeration, and what can still be eaten, it is good to know the three labels foods are given: use-by-date, sell-by-date, and the expiration date. Understanding what each of these terms mean can save you from eating an already spoiled food.

The **use-by-date** is the last day that you technically should have the product. At that point, it is beginning to deteriorate and is no longer good to eat.

The **sell-by-date** is the last day that a store can sell a product by. Despite this, said product is still edible and good typically ten days following this time.

The **expiration date** is when the product is done for good. Throwing away expired foods is highly suggested, to eliminate the possibility of accidentally eating one of these, even if they are an acclaimed long-lasting product.

Now that those basic terms have been understood, let’s take a look at a list of good to eat foods that won’t perish nearly as fast as anything else in your refrigerator or pantry:

Canned Foods – This is one of the most well-known sources of food that can last for up to five years. Though you may not want to rely on a five-year-old can of peas, the majority of canned goods are long-lasting and can still taste great even if they’ve been sitting in your pantry for an undetermined amount of time. Do take note, though, that canned foods DO have expiration dates. Nonetheless, they can last for a long time without refrigeration and offer a variety of different vegetables, fruits, beans, and more.

What foods are safe after a power outage

Snacks – Snack foods vary in their expiration dates, but a good thing to remember is that most crackers and pretzels can last over nine months and popcorn can still be edible for up to two years, making it one of the most durable snacks. Some snacks, such as cookies, will go stale rather than bad, but they are still edible. Just make sure to check your expiration dates before eating them.

Bread and Cereals – When it comes to bread, refrigeration helps it to last longer and prevent mold, however it can still last up to a week without refrigeration. Stale bread is also still good to eat, and protects against mold growing. Cereals can last anywhere from six to eight months unopened, and four to six months when opened. Similar to bread, cereal can become stale, but it is still edible.

Beverages – Most beverages (specifically bottled water) are able to be drunk even after the use-by-date stamped onto them, however particularly in sodas and beers, the color and flavoring may be off, even though they are still consumable. It is advised that you do not drink any beverages that have been unsealed for more than two weeks.

Fruits and Vegetables – There are a variety of fruits and vegetables that can last for a certain period of time (depending on what they are) without perishing. These include apples, bananas, peaches, pears, pineapples, kiwis, avocados, as well as potatoes, garlic, onions, tomatoes, and cucumbers, just to name a few. While these products last much longer when they are refrigerated, they each can maintain shelf life without it.

Milk – While any milk needs refrigeration to last, skim milk is a bit more durable than regular milk, and can still be used a few days after lack of refrigeration.

Spices – The durability of spices is typically long lasting and can range anywhere from one year to five, and some even infinitely, like salt. Checking expiration dates will help you to tell if it is no longer safe to eat.

By keeping yourself aware about which foods are safe to eat across long periods of time, you can prevent a disaster within a disaster should you ever be in a position where getting food or electricity is not an option. Ensuring that your pantry is stocked with lasting products before a problem arises will cancel out any further issues before they are even present, and will keep you both healthy — and alive!