



# FOOD RECEIVING & STORAGE TIPS

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- Maintain proper temperatures and storage conditions at all times.**
  - Refrigerated foods: 41°F (5°C) or below. Frozen foods: 0°F (-18°C) or below.
  - Use calibrated thermometers in the warmest part of the refrigerator and document temperatures at least daily.
  - Dry storage should be 50-70°F, well-ventilated, and dry.
  - Keep foods like flour, cereal, and powdered supplements sealed to prevent contamination and pests.
- Store foods in a manner that prevents cross-contamination.**
  - Store items in this order (top to bottom):
    - Ready-to-eat foods
    - Whole cuts of beef/pork
    - Ground meats
    - Poultry
- Label and date all foods.**
  - Clearly label prepared and open foods with *name, preparation/open date, discard date*.
  - Follow the 7-day maximum for refrigerated ready-to-eat TCS foods (Day 1 = prep/open date).
- Use food-grade, covered containers.**
  - Store food in clean, durable, food-grade containers with tight-fitting lids or proper wrapping.
  - Avoid reusing single-use containers (e.g., cardboard boxes, plastic tubs).
  - Remove food from cardboard boxes because they cannot be sanitized, can carry pests, and are a reservoir for dust and bacteria.
- Follow First In, First Out (FIFO) inventory management.**
  - Rotate stock so older items are used before newer ones.
  - Check expiration and discard dates daily, especially for high-risk foods.
- Store food off the floor and away from walls.**
  - Keep food at least 6 inches off the floor, 18 inches from the ceiling, on ventilated shelves and away from walls to allow cleaning, pest control, and airflow.
- Separate chemicals from food storage areas.**
  - Never store cleaning agents, pesticides, or personal care products near food, utensils, or single-service items.
- Obtain all foods from approved vendors.**
  - Purchase food from approved, licensed, and inspected sources. Specific requirements exist for pasteurized dairy, USDA-inspected meat, and certified shellfish.
- Discard damaged or contaminated items immediately.**
  - Throw away food that is expired, moldy, leaking, dented (on seams), swollen, or exposed to contamination.
  - When in doubt, *discard it*. Work with your vendor on return policy and process.
- Train staff and monitor compliance regularly.**
  - Ensure all dietary staff understand food storage rules and the reasons behind them.
  - Conduct routine audits and document all corrective actions to maintain compliance and resident safety.

Find previous top 10 lists at [www.ANFPonline.org/top10](http://www.ANFPonline.org/top10)