Make the Most of Your Dairy

From uneaten leftovers to spoiled food, 30-40% of food goes uneaten in the U.S. each year.¹ Learn what you can do to reduce your dairy food waste.

**KEEP IT FRESH**

- Make refrigerated foods your last stop at the grocery store, and the first thing you put away at home.
- Only buy the product size you will use in one week.
- Don’t leave perishable foods sitting out for more than 2 hours - only 1 hour if the temperature is above 90 °F.²
- Cheese is best served at room temperature. Hard cheeses can sit out for 2 hours, but soft cheeses should be tossed after 2 hours at room temperature.³
- Store milk, cheese and yogurt between 35 ° and 40 ° F to maximize freshness.²

**USE IT**

- Don’t toss yogurt because there is liquid on the top - that’s just the whey! Simply stir the whey back in for a creamier consistency.
- Remove mold from hard cheese by cutting a one-inch square around it. The rest is safe to eat.⁴
- When cooking with cheese on the stovetop, use low to medium heat, stirring constantly. High heat will toughen the cheese and make it stringy.
- Make your oatmeal, hot chocolate and soups with milk instead of water for a creamier, more nutritious taste.
- Milk should be heated gently and slowly. Excessive heat can result in a scorched flavor or a film of protein on the top of the milk.
- Make smoothies, marinades and dips with yogurt for an extra boost of protein and creaminess.

**FREEZE IT**

- Milk can be frozen for up to 3 months.⁵ Freeze it in any container, but remember to leave room for expansion because milk expands as it freezes.
- To thaw frozen milk, place in the refrigerator for at least a day. Freezing may alter the color or texture, but it’s still good for drinking and cooking!
- Salted butter can be frozen for up to 9 months and unsalted butter for 6 months.⁶ Let frozen butter thaw in the refrigerator or try grating it with a cheese grater.
- Yogurt can be frozen for up to 2 months⁷, but there may be changes in texture and loss of its live active cultures.
- Most hard cheeses can be frozen, but there may be changes in texture. Some cheeses become crumbly when thawed, while most shredded cheeses freeze well.
- Allow 24-48 hours to thaw in the refrigerator, which allows moisture to go back into the cheese.⁸

From a Healthier Michigan Project Grant. For more information, visit healthiermichigan.org.
**SAVE THE DATE**

The date on the milk container is the Sell-By date, not the expiration date. The **Best if Used By/Before date** indicates when a product will be of best flavor or quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.9

The **Sell-By date** tells the store how long to display the product for sale for inventory management. It is not a safety date.9

The **Use-By date** is the last date recommended for the use of the product while at peak quality. It is only a safety date on infant formula.9

The softer the cheese, the shorter the shelf life10:

- **Ricotta cheese** can last for 1 week
- **Cottage cheese** can last for 1 week
- **Cream cheese** can last for 2 weeks
- **Hard cheese** can last 3-4 weeks tightly wrapped in the refrigerator

**STORAGE TIPS**

Store **yogurt** on the upper shelf of the refrigerator and keep it tightly covered to maximize freshness.

Store **butter** on a middle shelf; wrap it tightly to keep it fresh.

Store **milk** on bottom shelf to keep it as cold as possible.

Store **cottage cheese** and **sour cream** on lower shelves to maintain quality longer.

Store **cheese** in its own drawer because it absorbs other flavors easily.

Keep freezer temperature at 0°F or below.

Avoid overpacking your refrigerator. Cold air must move around foods to keep them cold.

Keep refrigerator temperature between 35°-40°F.

Don’t store **milk** or **butter** in the door as they will be exposed to warmer air when the door is opened. Use the door for storing condiments, instead.

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Resources


Content courtesy of American Dairy Association Mideast