

About Home Freezer Meat Storage.

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Tom.

Every year we get questions like, "Are the four-year-old steaks that I found in the bottom of my freezer still safe to eat?" The answer is yes.

According to the USDA, frozen meat, stored at 0 degrees Fahrenheit will be safe to eat forever.

However, if meat is frozen too long it may lose nutrients and taste.

If you are unsure if frozen meat is still "good" fresh, simply thaw and cook it to find out. It will not kill you, or even make you ill. It may not be that tasty. Or maybe it will be fine.

Not All Home Freezers are Equal.

Chest Freezers are the best for storage and the most popular.

Pros: They hold more. They hold temperature well. They use the least electricity. Chest Freezers can keep meat frozen for several days during a power outage.

Cons: They do not self-defrost. If you do not empty and defrost them once a year, they accumulate a lot of ice and frost. Plus, you can lose track of beautiful, tasty steaks.

Upright Freezers are much handier but not as good for long-term storage.

Pros: Most Uprights self-defrost. Smaller footprint. Much of the meat is in sight. It is hard to lose steaks.

Cons: Every time the door is opened the frigid air falls out like a brick. That frigid air is replaced by warm humid room air in seconds. Even if the door is closed quickly the humidity of the room air turns to frost and the meat is temporarily warmed while the freezer uses electricity to chill the new air from room temp to zero.

Then some hours later the defrosting function kicks to remove the added frost. That operation warms the air inside the freezer for a short time which has a negative effect on the stored meat. Upright Freezers are leaky and will keep meat frozen less than 24 hours during a power outage. They store less per cubic foot.

Refrigerator Freezers are not intended for long term storage.

Pros: Handy for short term storage.

Cons: They are NOT a deep freezer. Meat should only be stored in Refrigerator Freezers for a short time before eating. A week or less. These freezer compartments do not maintain "deep freeze" temperature. They do not chill below zero, and they are subject to very frequent door openings and defrost cycles.

General Freezer Tips

Allow one cubic foot of freezer space for each 25 to 40 pounds of cut and wrapped meat.

Use a freezer thermometer. Freezer thermometers are cheap. Know your freezer temperature.

The USDA recommends storing meat between zero to -9 degrees Fahrenheit. Other sources say colder is better.

Run your freezer at -15 Fahrenheit. Many believe that lower temperatures give them more margin.

To reduce freezer-burn, which results from exposure to air, you can add a plastic layer. Some of our customers put ½ of their meat in an additional plastic bag for longer term storage.

