



Beef

The following are approximate storage times--if you keep meats solidly frozen and store them at 0° F, they will remain safe to eat well beyond the recommended time. However, they may show a change in quality.

Fridge time: 3 to 5 days- vacuum-packed products can have an extended storage time (see instructions on package for guidance).

Freezer time: If a freezer stays at 0° F or lower, meats will keep for several months.

- Roasts- six to 12 months
- Steaks and chops- four to six months
- Stew meats- three or four months.

Storage

1. If purchased beef is wrapped in transparent film, it can be refrigerated without re-wrapping. It can also be frozen up to 2 weeks without rewrapping. For longer freezer storage and to prevent freezer burn, repackage in heavy-duty aluminum foil, freezer paper or plastic freezer bags, removing as much air as possible.
2. Label and date frozen beef packages, including weight and/or number of servings. Practice the (first in, first out) FIFO inventory system.

Shopping

1. Choose beef with a bright cherry-red color. A darker purplish-red color is typical of vacuum-packaged beef. Once exposed to oxygen, beef will turn from a darker red to bright red.

Preparation

1. *Defrosting may not be required for some cuts such as steaks, but if cooking from a frozen state, make sure to allow for additional cooking time. (Use a [thermometer](#) for best results.)*
2. Do not defrost beef at room temperature. Defrost beef in the refrigerator, to prevent bacterial growth.
3. Place package on a tray to catch any drippings.
4. Depending on the method of preparation, defrosting may be suggested. Use the following as a guideline:
 - Allow 12 to 24 hours to defrost steaks, depending on thickness.
 - Allow 4 to 7 hours per pound to defrost large roasts or thick compact pot roasts.
 - Allow 3 to 5 hours per pound to defrost small roasts or thin pot roasts.
5. If using microwave or cold-water submersion methods of thawing, following the general safe handling ([safe handling](#)) instructions.

Cooking

1. Beef should be cooked to an internal temperature of 160° F ([dependent upon cut and individual preferences](#)). Use meat thermometers to ensure correct, internal temperature.
2. Insert the thermometer far enough so that the heat sensor reaches the center or the thickest part of roasts or meatloaf. For steaks and ground beef patties, inset stem horizontally into center.

Ovenproof meat thermometers are the most convenient type for cooking roasts. It remains in the roast throughout the cooking process.

Instant-read thermometers are best for all other cuts of beef and can be used for oven roasts too. They are not heat proof so insert *after* cooking to ensure doneness.

Roasts: 145°F for medium rare;160°F for medium. Remove from the oven when the thermometer registers 5°F to 10°F below the desired doneness. Let roast stand 15 to 20 minutes before carving. The internal temperature will continue to rise during standing and reach the desired temperature.

Steaks: medium rare (145°F) or medium (160°F) doneness.

Stew beef: Due to the nature of moist-heat cookery, pot roasts and beef for stew will always be well done. Simmer pot roasts and beef for stew until the beef is fork-tender.

Beef for kabobs: medium rare (145°F) or medium (160°F) doneness.

Stir-fry: For best flavor and texture, stir-fry beef just until outside surface of pieces is no longer pink. Stir-frying proceeds very rapidly so be careful not to overcook.

Note: Pregnant women, children, elderly and immuno-compromised individuals can be at an increased risk of developing foodborne illnesses that can have fatal consequences. Additional care should be taken for safe handling.