



## Sausage

There are many varieties of sausage that have varying flavors, cooking methods and storage times. Fresh, uncooked sausage needs to be handled safely, as you would any other type of meat. Some sausages are vacuum-packed, which can increase safe storage times.

### Types of Sausage

**Fresh sausage:** Fresh sausages are a coarse or finely comminuted meat food product prepared from one or more kinds of meat, or meat and meat byproducts. They may contain water not exceeding 3 percent of the total ingredients in the product. They are usually seasoned, frequently cured, and may contain binders and extenders. Examples: fresh bratwurst, fresh Italian sausage and fresh kielbasa.

### **Italian Sausage**

**Uncooked smoked sausage:** are made of one or more different kinds of chopped or ground meats, which have been seasoned and smoked. Water can be no more than 10 percent by weight. Examples: fresh smoked pork sausage and fresh smoked kielbasa.

**Cooked sausage:** are made of one or more different kinds of chopped or ground meats, which have been seasoned and cooked. Water can be no more than 10 percent by weight. Examples: wieners, knockwurst, bologna.

**Dry and Semi-dry sausage:** may or may not be characterized by a bacterial fermentation. When fermented, meats are better preserved as well as have a tangy flavor. The ingredients are mixed with spices and curing materials, stuffed into casings, and put through a carefully controlled, long, continuous air-drying process. Dry sausages require more production time than other types of sausages and results in a concentrated form of meat. Examples: pepperoni, salami, chorizo.

Low-fat and poultry sausages are also popular and available.

**Fridge time:** 3 to 5 days (dry sausage does not require refrigeration)

**Freezer time:** up to 2 months.

## Shopping

1. Let the label be your guide to sausage selection and handling. It will tell you if the product must be kept refrigerated, the nutrient content and the ingredients. All ingredients in the product must be listed by weight in descending order in the ingredient statement.
2. Although dating is a voluntary program and not mandated by the federal government, if a date is used, it must state what the date means.
  - If the sausage has a "use-by" date, follow that date. It is the last date recommended for the use of the product while at peak quality (the manufacturer of the product has determined the date). If the sausage has a "sell-by" date, or no date, store it for the times recommended above.

## Preparation

1. When cooking link sausages, cook slowly to avoid splitting the casings.
2. Turn sausages using tongs, not a fork that can puncture the casing and allow juices to escape.

## Cooking

1. **Fresh Sausage** must be cooked thoroughly to an internal temperature of 160° F before consuming. Fresh sausage may be cooked in two ways: parboiled and slow cooked.
  - Par-boil until sausage is gray throughout (about 10 to 15 minutes), and then pan fry. Parboiled sausage also may be grilled slowly over coals, turning frequently until gray-brown throughout.
  - Slow cook: it is extremely important that the sausage cook slowly, thoroughly and evenly.

2. **Cooked Sausage** needs to be re-heated, since it was cooked thoroughly during processing. Be sure to reheat thoroughly.
  - Steam: Remove pan of boiling water from heat and add sausage. Cover the pan and let it stand 10-15 minutes. It is not advisable to add sausages to vigorously boiling water because it may cause them to split.
  - Oven: reheat with other foods
  - Microwave, grill or pan-fried
3. **Uncooked Smoked Sausage** is smoked but not cooked. These products should be cooked to an internal temperature of 160° F, using a choice of methods (pan-fry, grill, parboil, etc.)
4. **Dry and Semi-dry Sausage** is cured during processing; later fermentation gives the tangy flavor. These varieties do not require cooking.

***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.***