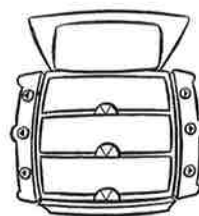




Food Safety



Fact file

Milk is a very perishable food. It contains water and is rich in other nutrients, which include protein, vitamins, and minerals that bacteria need in order to grow. Milk and dairy products should be stored in the refrigerator (covered) at 4 degrees Celsius or in the freezer. Growth of bacteria is slowed down below 4 degrees Celsius but is not stopped completely. Freezing stops the growth of bacteria, but it does not destroy the bacteria already present.

How long a product will keep and how it should be stored depend on what has been done to that product while it was being made.

Storing milk and dairy products

Liquid milk

Liquid milk should be covered and stored at 4 degrees Celsius. It will then last for 3 to 10 days. Waxed-card cartons and plastic containers protect milk from light, which affects its flavour and vitamin content. They are better for milk storage than glass.

Dried milk

Most dried milk in New Zealand is sealed in foil sachets, which are sometimes packed in cardboard boxes. Once you have opened the sachet, put its contents into an airtight container and store it away from sunlight in a cool, dry place. Non-fat dried milk, once opened, can be kept for 12 to 18 months if stored in an opaque, airtight container in a cool place. Dried whole milk keeps for six to nine months in the same conditions.

Evaporated milk

An unopened can of evaporated milk lasts one year at room temperature. Once opened, it must be refrigerated.

Sweetened condensed milk

Sweetened condensed milk keeps at room temperature for at least 1 year. However, once it is opened, it must be covered and refrigerated and lasts for up to one month in these conditions.



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Cheese

Always check the date stamp on the packet of cheese. Don't buy cheese that has surface mould (not to be confused with cheeses that are specially made to have a type of blue mould inside them). Cheese should be stored at 4 degrees Celsius and should be wrapped tightly to prevent exposure to air, which dries it out. Foil, transparent wrap, plastic bags, waxed paper, a tightly lidded container, or the original plastic wrapping are all good materials for wrapping cheese for storage in the refrigerator.

As a general rule, the more moisture the cheese contains, the shorter its shelf-life. Very hard cheeses last for a very long time.

You can also freeze cheese without affecting its flavour, but its texture can deteriorate.

Yoghurt, dairy dessert, and sour cream

Both yoghurt and sour cream can be stored at 4 degrees Celsius for about 30 days after the date they were manufactured.

Liquid cream

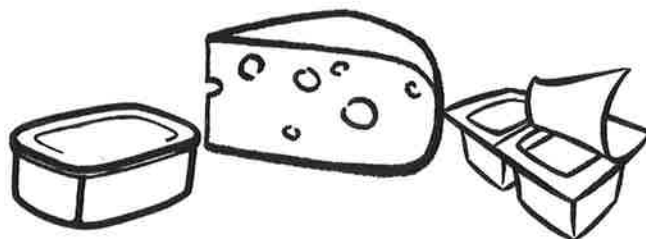
Cream has the same shelf-life as liquid milk. It will last for 3 to 10 days at 4 degrees Celsius. Ultra high temperature (UHT) treated whipping cream can be stored at room temperature for four to five months but, once opened, it must be refrigerated.

Ice cream

Ice cream needs to be stored frozen at -18 degrees Celsius.

Butter

Butter is a perishable product, and it needs refrigeration if it is being kept for longer than a few days. However, adding salt to butter during the manufacturing process increases its shelf-life because salt helps to preserve it. Unsalted butter needs to be stored in the refrigerator and should be used within six weeks of buying it. It quickly becomes rancid when stored at room temperature. Salted butters, such as sweet creamery, semi-soft, and cultured, will keep much longer. The length of safe storage depends on the type of butter, the amount of added salt, and the temperature during storage. Butter can be frozen successfully for up to nine months.



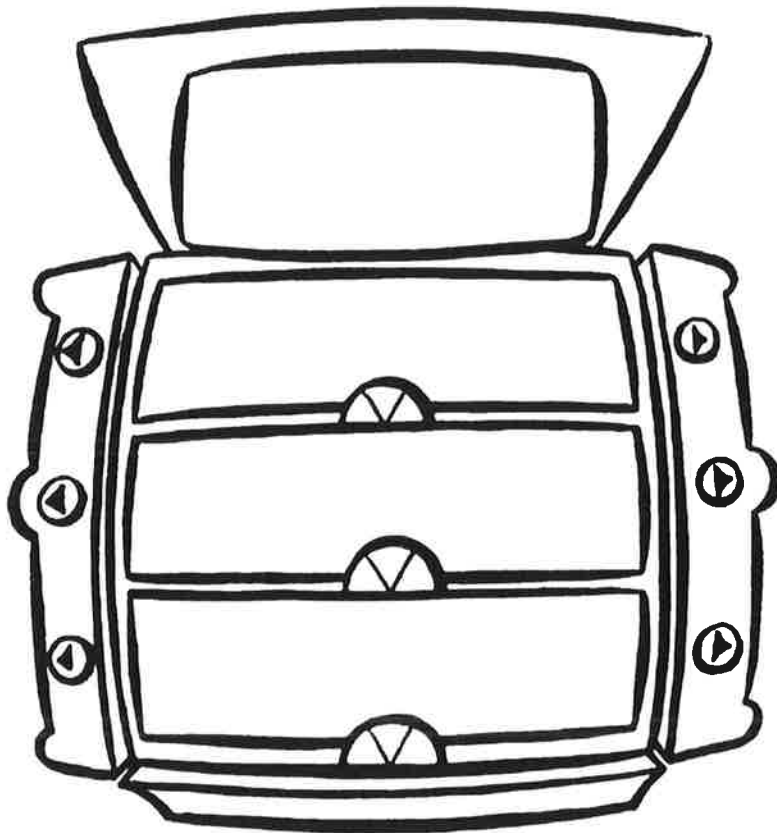
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Put it away!

Now that you know a lot more about storage, here's a chance to put it into action. You may want to work in groups for this activity. Using furniture or other materials in your classroom, make up a storage unit. It will need three areas – one area representing room temperature, one representing cool storage,



and a third one representing freezer storage. (Check out the nutribin on the CD-ROM to get ideas about how your storage unit might look.) Now get another group to draw food items and cut them out. See how quickly and efficiently you can store the foods that you are given.