

Sustainable Food Safety 201



PEAK SHIFT

CHAPTER 7

Storage

Protect the food. Control temperature. Preserve its history.

FDA model Food Code 2026, 3-302.11; 3-501.16-.18; Preface

BASIS: FDA CODE + TEACHING FRAMEWORK



Choose a Protected Location

Ordinary storage

Clean, dry, protected from splash and dust; generally at least 6 inches above the floor.

Overhead hazards

No storage under leaks or condensation on pipes, tubes, hoses or fire-protection systems.

Prohibited areas

No food in toilet, locker, dressing, garbage or mechanical rooms, or under open stairwells.

Specific exceptions

Some case-lot equipment and protected beverage or cased-container storage qualify.

A lid does not make a contaminated storage location acceptable.

3-305.11(A)-(C); 3-305.12; 4-204.122; Supplement 3-305.12(G)

BASIS: FDA FOOD CODE

Protect Ready-to-Eat Food

Ready-to-eat

Protect cooked food, washed produce and raw food intended to be eaten without further cooking.

Raw animal food

Separate raw food for cooking from ready-to-eat food and from unwashed produce.

Unwashed produce

Keep it separate from ready-to-eat food; soil is another contamination source.

Intended use matters: fish for sushi needs ready-to-eat protection.

3-302.11(A)(1),(8)
BASIS: FDA FOOD CODE

Arrange Raw Foods by Required Cooking

Highest protected area	Ready-to-eat foods, separated from raw foods for cooking.
Lower raw-food area	Ordinary fish and intact steaks; keep different types separated.
Below those foods	Ground beef in contained, protected storage.
Lowest raw-food level	Raw poultry in containers that prevent leakage onto other food.

This shelf example implements separation; identify the food's actual cooking category.

3-302.11(A)(1)-(2); 3-401.11(A); Annex 3, 3-302.11

Cover Food Without Blocking Safe Cooling

Ordinary storage

Use packages, covered containers or wrapping, except for specific Code exceptions.

During cooling

Loosely cover, or leave uncovered when protected from overhead contamination.

After cooling

Return to ordinary protected storage; the cooling exception is not permanent.

Uncovered cooling requires a protected location, not exposure beneath raw food.

3-302.11(A)(4),(B); 3-501.15(B)

BASIS: FDA FOOD CODE

Cold, Hot and Frozen Storage

Ordinary cold TCS

Maintain food at 41 F (5 C) or below.

Ordinary hot TCS

Maintain food at 135 F (57 C) or above.

Stored frozen food

Maintain it frozen; this section does not set one universal freezer-air number.

Narrow exceptions

Untreated shell eggs: equipment air 45 F or below. Qualifying roasts: holding 130 F or above.

Holding limits apply to the specified food and state, not every refrigerator item alike.

Measure Food, Not Just the Cabinet

Equipment reading

Shows conditions at its sensor, not the temperature of every pan.

Sensor placement

Warmest area of a refrigerated unit; coolest area of a hot-storage unit.

Food check

Measure the actual food to assess its holding temperature; account for explicit air-based exceptions.

A 37 F display cannot overrule a reliable 46 F reading in cold-held food.

A Failed Reading Needs a Food Decision

Finding

Cut melon in ordinary cold storage measures 46 F after preparation and cooling are complete.

Immediate response

Keep it out of service; notify the person in charge and check reliable time-temperature history.

Disposition

Use the applicable procedure and facts; do not invent a new time-control clock.

Moving food to a colder unit does not establish that its earlier history was safe.

3-501.16(A)(2); 3-501.19(A); 3-701.11(A)

BASIS: CODE + CORRECTIVE-WORKFLOW APPLICATION

Identify Working Containers

Food removed from packaging

Use its common name unless it is readily and unmistakably recognizable.

Useful example

Identify a white-powder bin as cornstarch; a date or shelf number does not name the food.

Keep source information

Retain usable ingredient and allergen information; preserve original dating information.

A working-container name and a safety date answer different questions.

3-302.12; 3-602.12(B); 3-602.11(B)(5)

BASIS: CODE + INFORMATION-RETENTION PRACTICE

Retail Packages Need More Than a Bin Label

Internal working bin

Common food name unless unmistakable; required safety dating is a separate duty.

Food packaged for retail

Applicable label includes identity, ingredients, net quantity, business identity and major allergens.

Nutrition labeling and other specific requirements or exemptions also need review.

3-302.12; 3-602.11(A)-(B); 1-201.10(B), Major Food Allergen

BASIS: FDA FOOD CODE

Prevent Allergen Cross-Contact in Storage

Contain

Keep allergen-containing ingredients closed and positioned to prevent spills into other food.

Separate tools

Use controlled scoops and clean food-contact equipment; do not move residue between bins.

Preserve identity

Keep ingredient information connected to the product, including substitutions.

A correct label cannot prevent a spill; good placement cannot replace ingredient information.

3-302.11(A)(3)-(4); 3-307.11; 3-602.11(B)(5); Annex 4, food allergens

BASIS: CODE + ALLERGEN-CONTROL PRACTICE

Decide Whether Date Marking Applies

Food and state	Refrigerated, ready-to-eat and TCS.
Preparation or opening	Prepared here, or commercially processed and packaged food opened here.
Holding period	Held more than 24 hours; check the specific exceptions.
Mark at opening	For qualifying commercial food kept over 24 hours, mark when the original container is opened.
Ordinary limit	Maximum 7 days at 41 F or below; preparation or opening is Day 1.

Seven days is a conditional maximum, not a promised shelf life for every food.

3-501.17(A)-(B),(E)-(G); 3-501.18

BASIS: FDA FOOD CODE

Count the Preparation or Opening Day

01 Thursday, October 8

Cooked lentils prepared: Day 1.

02 Wednesday, October 14

Day 7: last permitted day under the stated ordinary conditions.

03 Thursday, October 15

Day 8: discard; a normal smell does not extend the limit.

Count the first day, not seven additional days after it.

3-501.17(A)-(B),(D); 3-501.18(A)

BASIS: FDA FOOD CODE

A Mixture Keeps the Earliest Qualifying Date

01 First ingredient

Ready-to-eat lentils prepared October 8.

02 Later addition

Newly prepared, safely cooled vegetables mixed in October 10.

03 Combined food

Keep October 8 as Day 1; ordinary Day 7 remains October 14.

Mixing, transferring or rewrapping does not erase the older food's history.

3-501.17(C); 3-501.17(D)(1); 3-501.18

BASIS: CODE + BATCH-MANAGEMENT PRACTICE

An Earlier Safety Date Still Controls

Restaurant count

Cooked turkey opened November 2 would ordinarily reach Day 7 on November 8.

Manufacturer safety limit

A verified safety-based use-by of November 5 makes November 5 the earlier deadline.

Do not conceal or alter original dating information.

3-501.17(B)(2); 3-602.12(B)

BASIS: FDA FOOD CODE

Freezing Pauses the Count

01 Before freezing

Record the counted refrigerated days already used.

02 While frozen

Exclude only the time the food is actually frozen.

03 Afterward

Resume the remaining allowance; preserve the earlier history and any safety deadline.

Two counted days used leaves five, not seven new days.

Date-Marking Exceptions Are Product-Specific

Specific portions and shellstock

Individual portions on consumer request and shellstock have listed exceptions.

Qualified plant products

Certain inspected-plant deli salads, cheeses, cultured dairy and preserved fish are exempt.

Shelf-stable cured products

Specified dry fermented sausages and salt-cured products qualify; not every cured meat.

Not blanket permission

Check the exact product and processing conditions; other safety controls still apply.

A restaurant-made potato salad does not inherit the plant-made deli-salad exception.

Missing or Invalid Required Dates

No required date

Discard qualifying food missing the required date or day.

Beyond the limit

Discard food beyond the allowed time-temperature combination.

Invalid future mark

Discard qualifying food marked beyond its allowed time-temperature combination.

Smelling, relabeling or freezing does not correct a required-discard condition.

3-501.18(A); 3-501.17(A)-(D)

BASIS: FDA FOOD CODE

Rotate Stock Within Safe Deadlines

FIFO practice

First in, first out helps use older stock and prevent avoidable waste.

Safety decision

Compare actual usable deadlines and condition before choosing stock.

Past safety deadline / recalled

Remove from usable inventory; rotating it to the front does not make it usable.

Arrival order never overrides a controlling safety deadline.

3-501.17-.18; 3-602.12(B); 6-404.11; FIFO is restaurant practice

BASIS: RESTAURANT PRACTICE + CODE LIMITS

Keep Chemicals Out of Food Storage

Identify

Keep original labels; name each working cleaner, sanitizer or disinfectant container.

Separate

Use spacing or partitioning; do not store operational chemicals above food or clean supplies.

Never repurpose

Former poisonous or toxic material containers cannot become food or utensil containers.

A clean-looking chemical bucket is still prohibited for food storage.

7-101.11; 7-102.11 as supplemented; 7-201.11; 7-202.11; 7-203.11

BASIS: FDA FOOD CODE

Store Medicines Without Contaminating Food

Employee medicines

Only necessary medicines, apart from retail-sale stock; keep labeled and protected.

Refrigerated medicines

Keep packaged medicine inside a covered, leakproof container identified for medicines.

Placement

Prevent contamination and keep refrigerated medicines inaccessible to children.

A food refrigerator is permitted only with the required medicine protections.

7-207.11-.12; 7-208.11; 7-101.11

BASIS: FDA FOOD CODE

Separate Recalled and Unusable Stock

Remove from selection

Segregate damaged, spoiled or recalled products held for credit or return in designated areas.

Protect usable stock

Keep the held products separate from food, equipment, utensils, linens and single-use supplies.

Resolve disposition

Follow the recall or regulator's direction; no employee-created reconditioning method.

A credit or return hold is not permission to serve the food.

3-302.11(A)(7); 6-404.11; 3-701.11(A)

BASIS: CODE + RECALL-HANDLING PRACTICE

Storage Recap

Protect

Choose safe locations, separate raw and ready-to-eat foods, and prevent chemical and allergen transfer.

Control

Apply the correct holding rule and distinguish food temperature from equipment readings.

Preserve history

Identify food, maintain valid dates, retain earlier limits, and remove unusable stock.

Next: Preparation applies process-specific controls to the food you take from storage.

3-302.11-.12; 3-305.11-.12; 3-501.11,.16-.18; 3-602.11-.12; 6-404.11; 7-201.11

BASIS: FDA FOOD CODE