



**CARE AND SHARE**<sup>SM</sup>  
FOOD BANK FOR SOUTHERN COLORADO

# Meat Sorting Guidelines

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Care and Share Food Bank

Oct 2024



# Primary Requirements for meat

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- Must be frozen
  - Must have label
  - Must be unopened
- \*Rotisserie chicken

# Is frozen meat safe?

- Yes, freezing meat is one of the best ways to extend its shelf life. Freezing meat keeps food safe by slowing the movement of molecules causing microbes to enter into a dormant state.
- Freezing preserves food and prevents the growth of micro-organisms that cause spoilage and foodborne illnesses.
- The freezing process does not destroy nutrients in meat and poultry.
- Proper packaging helps maintain quality and prevent freezer burn- **Freezer burn does not make food unsafe**
- Color changes can occur in frozen foods. The bright red color of meat usually turns dark or pale brown depending on its variety. This may be due to lack of oxygen, freezer burn, or long storage
- Freezing doesn't usually cause color changes in poultry. However, the bones and the meat near them can become dark



# What is Freezer Burn

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Freezer burn is the result of moisture loss from storage in the freezer. It can happen to any food that is placed in the freezer. Freezer burnt food is safe to eat.

Freezer burned pieces can be cut off prior to cooking if quality concerns are present.

# Why does meat change color or texture?

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- Myoglobin- a protein in blood is responsible for the red color seen in most meat. Storage, lighting and temperature lead to oxidation and formation of metmyoglobin that turns meat brown- this does not affect safety and occurs during the cooking process.
- Color changes while meat and poultry are frozen do not affect their safety. You may see darkening or dimming in the colors of red meats and ground meats. Bones on poultry may become darker due to their porous nature.
- Iridescent colors on meat are simply because of fat, iron, and other compounds. You may see a rainbow looking tint or even green cast on the meat. This does not represent decreased safety or quality.
- Gray or green tint is from pigments used during the curing process. Nitrite is one of these chemicals and is generally colored to distinguish it from other ingredients like salt and sugar.

# Rotisserie Chicken and Deli Meats

Per Feeding America and Walmart donation guidelines, Frozen rotisserie chickens and packaged sliced deli meats are safe to freeze and donate.

All deli meats can be frozen, but cured meats like salami, pepperoni and bologna tend to do best because they contain less water.

The best way to thaw frozen deli meat is overnight in the refrigerator or until fully defrosted—larger pieces can take longer.

Is this ok?



Yes- This is safe to eat.



Is this ok?



Yes- This is safe to eat



Is this ok?



Yes- This is safe to eat.

Is this ok?



Yes- This is safe



Is this ok?



Yes- This is safe to eat



Is this ok?



No , This does not  
have proper labeling

Is this ok?



No, has opened  
packaging



Check out this video about  
meat color and safety!

CLICK ME





# What types of meat should we toss?

Unopened or torn packaging regardless of how the meat looks

- Meats with no labeling
- Meat that is not frozen
- Meat that appears to be slimy

# I wouldn't buy that!

- We must change our mindset of safe vs retail. Retailers have led us to believe that all foods are pristine and beautiful.
- Retailers donate these items to us because people will not buy them but that does not mean they are not safe and nutritious products.
- We want to leave the choice to our neighbors; instead of throwing away items that our own personal biases have led us to believe are unsafe.



Feeding America, Barbers Foods, Centennial Cuts, USDA, Colorado Beef Council , Fresh Connect Central , CDA and CSU Extension.

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