

# Home food fact checker

Advice on some common household food safety questions and misconceptions.

Here we answer some of the most common food safety questions we get asked about different types of food.

## FSA EXPLAINS

There are a number of myths and misconceptions about how long you can store food, when you know it's gone off, and how to keep your food safe at home. By fact-checking the most common questions, we hope this will help you to stay safe and avoid throwing away good food unnecessarily.

## Rice

### How long can you safely eat rice for after cooking?

Rice may be eaten cold if it is cooled down quickly. Put the rice in the fridge and consume within 24 hours.

You can get food poisoning from eating reheated rice. It's not the reheating that causes the problem, but the way the rice has been stored before it's reheated.

Keep rice in the fridge for no more than one day until reheating. When you reheat any rice always check the dish is steaming hot all the way through.

Uncooked rice can contain spores of a bacterium called *Bacillus cereus*. This bacteria can cause food poisoning. The spores of *Bacillus cereus* can survive being cooked. The longer cooked rice is left at room temperature, the more likely it is that the bacteria or toxins will make the rice unsafe to eat.

### Can you reheat takeaway rice?

You should never reheat rice more than once. Extra care should be taken with takeaway rice. Ideally takeaway rice should be eaten shortly after purchase or shortly after it has been delivered.

This is because some food businesses may pre-cook their rice and then re-heat it before it is given to customers. Whether it is safe to reheat the cooked rice will depend on how it was stored, handled and if it was cooked outright in the first place. It's always worth asking the takeaway business how they handle the rice.

## **Can you freeze rice?**

You can freeze rice, but should cool the rice quickly before putting it in the freezer. To do this you could place the container of rice in cold water, then cover and store it in the freezer. By making sure rice goes in the freezer within an hour of cooking, you will stop bacteria multiplying and producing a toxin. Before eating, you should defrost your rice in the fridge and then reheat it until it is piping hot before eating immediately.

## **Eggs**

### **When eggs float are they bad?**

We do not suggest using the egg float test to tell if eggs are safe or not. Eggs are safe to eat for a couple of days after the [best before date](#). The best before date should be stamped on the egg. You should make sure both the white and yolk of the egg are cooked thoroughly. You can use eggs a couple of days after the best before date in cooking or baking.

### **Are eggs safe if they have red spots in the yolk?**

Egg yolks with red spots on are safe to eat. The red spots are small blood spots which are sometimes found on egg yolks.

### **Should you store eggs in the fridge?**

Eggs should be stored in a cool, dry place. Ideally eggs should be stored in the fridge. The storage area should be cleaned regularly. Follow the manufacturer's advice and avoid storing eggs where they would be exposed to extreme temperature changes. Temperature changes can lead to condensation on the surface, which causes increased penetration of Salmonella from the outside of the shell into the egg.

### **Can I freeze eggs?**

Eggs can be frozen and used safely at a later date. Simply crack your eggs into a container, seal and freeze. You can separate yolks from whites first if you prefer and then put them into separate containers.

Label the containers so you can easily identify them when you wish to use them. This can be useful for baking. You can also crack the egg into a sealable container and beat it before freezing. This can be easily used to make scrambled eggs or an omelette.

## **Fruit**

### **Can you eat brown bananas?**

Fruit that is a bit overripe, such as brown bananas, wrinkly apples and slightly mushy strawberries, can be eaten normally. This is as long as they don't contain any mould. Overripe fruit is great for cooking, baking and made into smoothies.

### **Should you wash fruit?**

Remember to wash fruit and vegetables with water before you eat them. This is to make sure that they are clean and harmful bacteria can be removed from the outside. You should wash

them under a running tap, or in a bowl of fresh water, making sure to rub their skin under the water. You can start with the least soiled items first and give each of them a final rinse.

### **Can you still eat food if you remove the mouldy part?**

Food that is obviously rotten or containing mould should not be eaten. This is due to potential risks from the mould. This advice is especially important for people in vulnerable groups. This includes children, the elderly, pregnant women and those who have a weakened immune system.

While it is possible that removing the mould and a significant amount of the surrounding product could remove any unseen toxins that are present, there is no guarantee that doing so would remove them all.

## **Vegetables**

### **Can you eat potatoes when they go green and start to sprout?**

If potatoes have sprouted, simply remove the sprouts before use. Remember to cut off any green or rotten bits before using.

Green bits on potatoes can contain high levels of natural toxins called glycoalkaloids. Glycoalkaloids are usually found in potatoes at low levels, but they can be higher in:

- green parts
- damaged parts
- sprouted parts

High levels of glycoalkaloids can upset the digestive system and cause symptoms such as abdominal pain, vomiting and diarrhoea. However, glycoalkaloid poisoning is extremely rare, even though potatoes are eaten in very large amounts in many countries.

To avoid high levels of glycoalkaloids being produced in potatoes, store them in a dark, cool and dry place.

### **Can potatoes be frozen?**

You can freeze cooked or parboiled potatoes which have been boiled for 5 minutes. Leftover cooked potatoes can also be frozen. You can roast boiled potatoes straight from the freezer, make sure they are steaming hot all the way through. Put them in the oven with a little oil to crisp up.

### **Can you store potatoes in the fridge?**

Store raw, unpeeled potatoes in a cool, dark place, like a cupboard. Do not store in the fridge. Potatoes stored in the fridge can form more sugars, which can mean higher levels of [acrylamide](#) when the food is cooked roasted and fried.

### **How long can you eat vegetables after their best before date?**

Vegetables past their [best before date](#) may become wrinkly or mushy, but are safe to eat as long as there is no visible sign of decay. Make sure to check for rotting or mould before eating.

The best before date is about quality, not safety. Food will be safe to eat after the best before date but may not be at its best. The length of time vegetables are acceptable to eat after a best before date can depend on the product and the storage instructions.

WRAP's [food storage A to Z tool](#) offers advice for different foods after the best before date.

## **Are raw kidney beans poisonous?**

Canned beans purchased in the supermarket are safe to consume as they have been pre-soaked and boiled to kill any toxins present.

Raw beans, especially red kidney beans can be risky. This is because they naturally contain a lectin that can produce toxic effects. You should not slow cook raw red kidney beans as it does not destroy the toxin and may increase its toxicity.

## **Meat**

### **Is it safe to reheat meat in the microwave?**

You can reheat meat in a microwave once. Make sure that it is steaming hot all the way through before eating. It is best to use small pieces of meat, as large pieces may dry out in some places while not being thoroughly heated in others.

It is a good idea to stir food while it is reheating. When food is microwaved it can be very hot at the edges and still be cold in the centre, stirring helps to prevent this.

If you are reheating a food product in a microwave, follow the manufacturer's instructions on the packaging, including advice on standing and stirring. Standing and stirring are part of the process of cooking and reheating in a microwave. This will help to make sure that food is the same temperature all the way through.

### **Can you reheat meat more than once?**

Previously cooked and frozen meat should only be reheated once. However, you can safely cook defrosted meat into a new meal and freeze for use another day. For example, you can use your frozen chicken in a chicken curry, and then freeze this to reheat and eat another day.

## **Canned food**

### **Is food safe if the can has a dent in it?**

Food should remain fit to eat if a can is dented, providing the denting of the can is shallow and there are no other obvious signs that the can is damaged.

However, if the denting is deep, the can may have a hidden split, hole or break in the seal. This could result in a can that is no longer a reliable container. If this is the case, the food inside should not be eaten. If the denting has caused the can to rust, the food inside should not be consumed either.

You should avoid eating food from a visibly bulging can. If the can spurts when it is opened, this may be a result of gas build up in the food. This could be due to the presence and growth of microorganisms. These microorganisms can spoil the food and can make it unsafe. If consumers have purchased cans which are visibly bulging, they should return them to the retailer.

### **How long can canned food be eaten after the best before date?**

The length of time canned food is acceptable to eat after a [best before date](#) depend on the product, storage conditions and the brand.

Follow the manufacturer's instructions on the 'open life'. This usually indicates where to store products and for how long. Different brands of the same products can undergo different manufacturing processes. This can affect their composition and how perishable they are.

### **Can you eat canned food cold?**

Many canned foods intended to be cooked before eating will not pose a safety risk if eaten cold. However, this will depend on the product. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions before eating.