BUCKS COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Flood-Contaminated Foods

Floodwaters may carry silt, raw sewage, oil or chemical wastes. Fifth and disease-causing bacteria in floodwater will contaminate food, making it unsafe to eat.

Thoroughly inspect any food left in the house after a flood. Floodwater may have covered it, dripped on it or seeped into it. Even though some foods are protected by their containers, if you are in doubt about the safety of a food, throw it out rather than risk disease.

Use the following guidelines when deciding which foods to discard and which to save.

Food to Discard

1. Opened containers and packages which have come in contact with floodwaters.
2. Unopened jars and bottles.
3. Containers of spices, seasonings and flavorings.
4. Flour, grains, rice, sugar and coffee in canisters or bags.
5. Paper, cloth, fiber or cardboard boxes, even if the contents seem dry. This includes salt, cereals, pasta products, rice and any "sealed" packages of crackers, cookies or mixes within a larger paper box.
6. Commercially-canned foods that are dented, bulging, rusty or leaking. Cans which have been tossed about and are found far from their normal storage spot. Seams on these cans may have been weakened or their seals broken, causing contamination or spoilage.
7. Jam or jelly sealed with paraffin.
8. Containers with non-sealed, fitted lids, such as cocoa or baking powder.
9. Commercially-bottled carbonated beverages. If the cap is crusted with silt, don't attempt to wash since pressure in bottles may cause an explosion.
10. Foil or cellophane packages.
11. All fresh fruits and vegetables.
12. Fresh meat, fish and poultry which have been in contact with floodwaters.
13. Home-canned foods.
14. Foods in containers will pull-tops, corks or screw caps.
15. All foods that were covered by water which may have been contaminated with industrial waste even those foods sealed in unopened cans.
16. If floodwater has entered your freezer or refrigerator, dispose of all food not sealed in metal cans.

Food To Save

Commercially-canned foods are usually safe after being in flood waters if the metal can appears undamaged. But discard cans if they are rusty, creased, dented, crushed, bulging or have ends that spring in and out. The contents may be contaminated. DO NO TASTE.

All cans must be washed and sanitized before they are opened.

To disinfect cans:

1. Remove labels. (they harbor bacteria.) Wash cans in strong detergent solution with a scrub brush. Remove all silt.
2. Immerse scrubbed containers for 15 minutes in cold (60-70°F) chlorine solution. Household bleaches contain from 2% to 6% chlorine. The amount of bleach to add to water depends on the percent chlorine it contains:

% chlorine in bleach	Volume of bleach to add to 1 quart water	Volume of bleach to add to 1 gallon water
2%	2 teaspoons	2 tablespoons
4%	1 teaspoon	1 tablespoon
6%	½ teaspoon	2 teaspoons

3. Remove containers from solution and air-dry before opening

For additional safety, thoroughly cooked the canned food before eating it.