

Comments from the Inspector on Storage of Food

Food Safety Team, USAF School of Aerospace Medicine

After foods are delivered to your facility, it is your responsibility to prevent early deterioration of those foods by properly storing them until the moment when they are prepared. Some important factors to remember are:

1. Make sure to rotate your stock. Use the first in, first out (FIFO) method, by using the older foods first. If product containers don't have an expiration date, or a "use by" date, mark them with the date that they were received to help you identify those foods that have been in storage the longest.
2. Store foods in covered containers and in a clean and dry location. If a food item is removed from its original container, label that container with the common name of the food. Store food items at least six inches off the floor and away from the wall; this is to allow air circulation, to facilitate cleaning, and to prevent insect and rodent infestation.
3. Do not store foods in locker rooms, toilet rooms, dressing rooms, garbage rooms, mechanical rooms or under any source of contamination, such as leaking water lines. Never store chemicals in an area where you could contaminate foods.
4. When placing foods in the refrigerator, it is important to separate cooked or ready to eat foods from raw foods to prevent cross contamination. One way to do this is to store ready to eat foods above raw animal foods. Note: a ready to eat food is one that is not going to be further prepared, cooked, or reheated to remove or destroy harmful microorganisms (for example: salads, luncheon meats, cheeses, etc.).

For more information, contact your base Public Health office at 6-1225. Or contact the Food Safety Team at the USAF School of Aerospace Medicine (Brooks AFB, TX), at (210) 536-2058 -DSN 240-2058- or E-mail a message to jose.diaz@mirage.brooks.af.mil