

Q&A On Storing Meat Without Refrigeration In Hot Areas

You work hard to stretch your grocery dollars, but there's no way around it – meat is expensive.

When you find a good deal, or if you're preparing for an emergency, you stockpile. Also, if you're a hunter like most of the people in my family are, you probably bring in game meat. Regardless of how much meat you have in the freezer – a lot or a little – when emergency strikes, you don't want it to go bad.

"How can I store meat in Florida with no refrigeration? Your attic is not cool, your storage building is not cool, and if you go underground it is still only about 68°F if you are lucky. Can you please give me some ideas?"

Thank You.

Frank "

Yes, Frank, you got it right! This isn't much of an issue if you lose power because of a blizzard in Connecticut in February. That's an entirely different set of worries, but keeping meat cold isn't one of them. But if you lose it because of [a hurricane in Florida or Texas](#) or the Bahamas in September, you have a problem. I know it because I live in Florida too.

Once meat defrosts, you're on a pretty strict time-clock, especially if you don't have a fridge. There are, of course, refrigeration units that you can build that don't need power, but chances are good that if you're reading this, you're probably a little too far behind the eight ball for that kind of info to do you any good.

Here are some tips that may help you get a bit more mileage before your meat goes bad. None of them are long-term solutions to refrigerating meat without power, but they'll help you get through a little longer.

Freeze Jugs and Baggies of Water

If you know the emergency is coming and you have meat stored in your refrigerator, prepare. Block ice melts much slower than bagged, cubed ice, plus you're probably not going to be able to lay hands on a bag of ice for two hundred square miles.

I save milk jugs and juice jugs (a couple of different sizes) and fill them with water. I usually fill some quart-sized baggies, too, then I freeze them. Typically, it takes a day or a day and a half for the milk jugs to freeze all the way through, and less for the smaller containers and baggies.



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I realize you may not have much room in your freezer to hold the jugs, but since you're only a few days away from the storm, Throw the frozen ones to the back of the top shelf of the fridge where it's coldest and throw a few more in the freezer.

Basically, what you're doing here is creating the elements for an old-fashioned ice box that will keep the inside of your fridge and freezer cooler for longer. For Irma, I froze 5 gallons of water one half-gallon and several baggies. You can also use them in coolers, and when it melts, you have drinking water. Double duty!

For that matter, freeze your milk, juice, and other perishable liquids to extend their lives and to have additional “ice” to keep the inside of the freezer, fridge, or cooler cold.

Use the Igloo Effect

Group food together into piles in your fridge or freezer. Doing so will keep it all colder longer. This is something you can do before a major storm as part of your preps.

Make a few smaller clusters that you’ll use in one day, then you can just pull them from the freezer all at once and close the door for the rest of the day.

Dry Ice

Dry ice is -140 degrees F. That’s cold enough to freeze your skin instantly, but it’s a good thing when it comes to power outages because 50 pounds of dry ice will keep a fully stocked 18-cubic-inch freezer cold for two days and it’s not that hard to come by.

I know that there are places in Miami and Tampa in Florida that sells it, and I’m sure that there are other places, too. Plus you can order it and have it delivered. May be a worthy investment if you have a ton of meat.

Make a Clay Pot Cooler

This is actually a really good idea and can be made pretty much on the fly if you have two unglazed terra cotta pots – one bigger than the other.

It works no matter the size of the pots; as a matter of fact, it’s based on the same premise as modern refrigeration: evaporative cooling.

Here's also [a Survivopedia article](#) that walks you through it, even though it's a simple project, I would hypothesize that if you used extremely cold water, the temp inside the pots would drop significantly, too.

Don't Freeze it to Begin With

Yes, I realize this is a case of pointing out the glaringly obvious, but it's only glaringly obvious because you're sitting there with a freezer full of thawing meat and no idea what to do with it.

The bottom line is that without refrigeration, your meat is going to be bad in a few days, and in the heat, there aren't many viable options for keeping meat cold other than electric refrigeration. Store meat in other ways – can it or dry it – if you want to have it for emergencies.

You can find a lot of helpful info in [this article about canning meat](#), and you can also get the proper way to dry the meat if you read [this article](#).

If you're worried about wasting it, the only real solution is to cook it up and what you don't eat, give away.

For Irma, a bunch of us got together and had a huge barbecue. Not only did it keep us from wasting meat, it gave us all a much-needed morale boost and some leftovers to throw in the cooler. Also, keep your coolers in the shade to extend what little bit of cold you have left for as long as possible.

Unfortunately, there aren't a ton of options for keeping meat cold for longer than a few days in hot regions without refrigeration. Heat trumps ice every time.

But there are ways to do it, same as our ancestors used to do it. Check the banner below for more!



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However, I hope that some of these tips helped at least a little bit, and if you're in this situation, please share it before you just let it go to waste. In those situations, there's never a lack of people who could use it.

If you have any other suggestions for keeping meat cold in hot climates without refrigeration, please share them with us in the comments section below.