

10 Shelf Stable Foods That Can Outlast You...

You've just gotten halfway through a recipe, only to discover that a key ingredient is missing because you tossed it during your last cleaning spree.

It's a predicament you shouldn't have to face again — at least when it comes to the nine kitchen shelf stable staples I have listed here.

When stored properly, these everyday items will last for years — sometimes decades — even after they've been opened. And they'll lose very little, if any, of their original quality as time passes. So think twice before tossing one of these items. If you've been handling it correctly, chances are it is just fine.

1. **HONEY**

Pure honey is as durable as it is delicious; it keeps safe indefinitely. Honey may change color or crystallize over time, but that won't make it unsafe.

Keep it fresh: Store in a cool area and keep tightly closed. Revive crystallized honey by placing the opened jar in warm water and stirring until dissolved.

2. **RICE**

White, wild, arborio, jasmine and basmati rice all have an indefinite shelf life, when kept free from contaminants. The exception: brown rice. Thanks to its higher oil content, it won't keep nearly as long.

Keep it fresh: Store in a cool, dry area. Once opened, place rice in a sealed airtight container or place original package in a resealable heavy-duty freezer bag. For added protection, store rice in the refrigerator or freezer.

3. **SUGAR**

White, brown or powdered — sugar never spoils because it doesn't support bacterial growth. The real challenge is to prevent it from becoming rock-hard.

Keep it fresh: Keep sugar in a cool, dry area. To prevent sugar from hardening after opening, place it in an airtight container or cover the original package in a heavy-duty plastic bag and seal tightly.

4. **HARD LIQUOR**

Whipping up some penne alla vodka and a pitcher of cocktails? Distilled spirits —vodka, rum, whiskey, gin, tequila and the like — don't spoil, even after opening. The taste and aroma may fade gradually, but it'll take ages before you notice.

Keep it fresh: Store in cool, dark area, away from direct heat or sunlight. Keep bottle tightly closed when not in use.

5. **MAPLE SYRUP**

Pure maple syrup not only makes your pancakes special, it adds tremendous flavor to a whole range of dishes. Best of all, it keeps forever in the freezer.

Keep it fresh: Refrigerate after opening. For long-term storage, freeze maple syrup in airtight plastic containers.

6. **PURE VANILLA EXTRACT**

Yes, it's more expensive than its imitation counterpart. But pure vanilla extract keeps forever, so you'll never have to waste a drop.

Keep it fresh: Store in cool, dark cupboard and keep tightly closed when not in use.

7. **DISTILLED WHITE VINEGAR**

A reliable standby in everything from marinades to salad dressings, distilled white vinegar will remain virtually unchanged as the years pass by.

Keep it fresh: Store vinegar a cool, dark area and keep tightly capped after each use.

8. **CORNSTARCH**

A must-have for thickening sauces, gravies, and puddings. Cornstarch will keep indefinitely if it's kept dry and free from contaminants.

Keep it fresh: Store in cool, dry area; keep package tightly closed between uses.

9. **SALT**

From the basic table variety to fancier versions like kosher and sea, salt is a flavor enhancer that never spoils or goes stale. Keep it fresh: Store in cool, dry area.

10. **CORN SYRUP**

If you find corn syrup in the back of your pantry (and can't remember buying it) it will be fine to consume as long as the lid has been tightly sealed after opening.



Nutrition and Food Safety Department 2013