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NDSU | EXTENSION

Smart and quick food safety during a refrigerator power outage

“How long is food OK in the fridge when the fridge goes out?” one of my friends asked me.

Then he mentioned throwing away some summer sausage from a friend, along with most of the contents of his fridge.

If I told you the source of the meat, his friend might find out he threw it. I will give you a big hint: these animals build dams, have large flat tails and prominent teeth.

I suspect my friend wasn't overly disappointed about the loss of that summer sausage.

When a refrigerator loses power and food has been above safe temperatures for too long, the decision about what to keep becomes fairly straightforward.

No one wants to be part of the national problem of food waste. We toss 30% to 40% of food, and much of it ends up in landfills. According to the US Department of Agriculture, food waste adds up to 133 billion pounds annually, with a price tag of \$161 billion.

When an appliance malfunctions, the issue is out of our control unless we catch it soon enough and can move the food to another fridge.

Even when food is stored cold at less than 40 degrees Fahrenheit, spoilage microorganisms can act slowly. Sometimes they let us know they are doing their devious work.

For example, molds produce colorful fuzzy substances that lead to off-odors, tastes and potential safety issues. We know not to taste it, with some exceptions such as blue cheese, where mold is supposed to be present.

Yeasts can announce their presence in foods such as pickles with cloudiness in the brine.

Bacteria are trickier. Most of the time, we will not see, smell or taste their presence. We need to track temperature and time to determine the safety of food.



Perishable food that has been at room temperature for too long can't be spared without taking a risk to your health. (Pexels photo)

I do not enjoy wasting food, but perishable food that has been at room temperature for too long can't be spared without taking a risk to your health.

We recommend following the US Department of Agriculture's two-hour rule. If perishable food is above 40 degrees for more than two hours, then, unfortunately, it needs to be tossed.

What foods are perishable and need to be tossed in case of a refrigerator outage?

- Raw meat, poultry, gravy, casseroles, soups and stews would all fall in the throw-away category because they are high in moisture and protein, which bacteria love.
- Soft cheeses, such as blue, Brie, cottage, cream, ricotta and Muenster, would need to be tossed, along with shredded cheese. Processed cheese, hard cheeses (Colby, Swiss, Parmesan, Romano) and grated cheese (Parmesan, Romano) are OK.
- Milk, cream, sour cream and yogurt would all need to be discarded. Hard-cooked eggs and other dishes containing eggs, such as custards, need to be discarded if left at room temperature for too long.
- Cut fresh fruit is perishable, while uncut fruit, dried fruit and opened fruit juice are OK. Plant foods can be composted.
- Many condiments, such as barbecue sauce, mustard and taco sauce, are OK because of their acidity. Fruit pies are safe at room temperature, but cream pies are perishable and would need to be tossed.
- Cooked pasta, rice and

potatoes need to be discarded if at room temperature too long.

The USDA has a downloadable safety chart (www.foodsafety.gov/food-safety-charts/food-safety-during-power-outage) with many more examples. Consider saving it to your computer or printing it “just in case.” You never know when appliances will decide they have reached the end of their lifespan.

No meal is worth the risk, no matter how “unique” the protein source might be. If you're planning meals around what you have on hand, here's a simple, flexible recipe to try, courtesy of Iowa State University's “Eat Smart Spend Smart” program.

One Pot Meal: Pasta Fagioli Soup

1/2 pound turkey sausage
1 tablespoon oil (canola or olive)

1 cup onion, diced
1 clove garlic, minced
2 cups water
2 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth

1 can (15.5 ounces) white beans (cannellini or great northern), drained and rinsed
1 can (14.5 ounces) diced tomatoes
1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper

1 cup whole wheat pasta
1 cup fresh spinach, cut into bite-sized pieces

Shredded Parmesan cheese

Heat a large saucpan over medium heat. Cook sausage and drain. Remove sausage to a plate or bowl. Add oil to the pan and heat. Add onion and garlic, then saute for 3 minutes. Add water, broth, drained beans, tomatoes and pepper. Heat to boiling. Add pasta and cook until tender (about 8 minutes). Reduce heat to low. Add sausage and spinach, and simmer until spinach is wilted (about 3 minutes). Top with Parmesan cheese if desired.

Makes five servings (1-1/2 cups per serving). Each serving has 320 calories, 8 grams (g) of fat, 21 g of protein, 43 g of carbohydrate, 8 g of fiber and 650 milligrams of sodium.

Tips to build a social network in middle age

By the time a person reaches middle age, he or she has plenty of experience navigating life. Mid-life is a unique stage when people find children are more independent and moving out, work obligations may shift and old social structures no longer may be there. While those in their 40s, 50s and 60s may have mastered successful careers or raising children, skills in maintaining a strong network of friends may not be so robust. Building and strengthening a social network is something middle-aged adults should think about.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says social connection is linked to reduced stress, better sleep, improved well-being, and longevity. Middle-aged individuals can explore these ideas to build a meaningful and engaging social network.

- **Emphasize shared passions.** Shared passions provide natural ways to meet people. Interests enable friendships to



form organically over activities you generally enjoy. Classes and workshops that feature a hobby you like are great places to start meeting new people in a structured and social way.

- **Be a regular.** Frequent certain “haunts” regularly, such as a park, community center, coffee shop, etc. This way you'll see the same people again and again and can build a rapport.
- **Embrace volunteering.** Recent studies have found that volunteering, even for just an hour a week, can lead to slower biological aging, especially among retirees. Volunteering offers physical, social and psychological benefits

and connects volunteers with like-minded people.

- **Reconnect with old friends.** Sometimes it's not about finding new people, but re-establishing connections with those you already know. Reach out to former coworkers, neighbors or classmates and express your desire to catch up. Social platforms also can reacquaint you with people you may have lost connection with.

After you've made the initial connections, its key to fuel the burgeoning friendship. Be consistent with interaction, aiming for frequent follow-ups, whether weekly or monthly. People appreciate being listened to, so do your share of active listening as well as sharing your own stories. It's important to be willing to try new experiences that new friends may suggest. Being a little vulnerable can let others see just who you are and may invite deeper connections.

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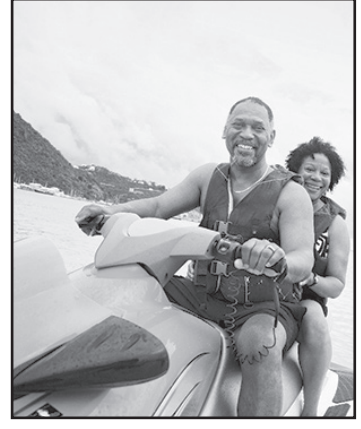
Unforgettable anniversary getaway ideas

Wedding anniversaries are worthy of celebration no matter how many years have gone by. More than just dates on a calendar, anniversaries are milestones in a couple's shared journey. Although romantic dinners and gifts are always fine ideas, what better way to commemorate love than to jet off to a romantic locale for some one-on-one time?

A recent study by American Express found that 62 percent of couples planned to travel for their anniversaries in the coming year. The WeddingWire 2023 Newlywed Report indicated that couples spend an average of \$2,000 to \$5,000 on their anniversary trips.

So where should celebratory couples head to fall deeper in love? These romantic spots are all great options.

- **Paris, France:** Paris is known as the “City of Love” for a reason. History, food and culture collide in this historic European city. Picnics by the Eiffel Tower, moonlit cruises down the Seine, or wandering the streets of Montmartre are



all ways to enjoy this location that exudes romance.

- **The Maldives:** The Maldives may be Asia's smallest nation, but this archipelago located in the Indian Ocean boasts sun-kissed beaches and turquoise waters, making it a romantic travel paradise. Couples can enjoy private overwater bungalows, candlelit dinners on the sand and vibrant coral reefs just waiting to be explored.
- **Santorini, Greece:** This city, perched atop cliffs overlooking the Aegean Sea, of-

fers breathtaking sunsets and charming alleys perfect for romantic strolls. The iconic white-washed villages are ideal for snapping selfies while enjoying the magic, charm and history of the surrounding areas.

- **Kyoto, Japan:** Once the capital of Japan, this city on the island of Honshu is famous for its classical Buddhist temples, gardens and imperial palaces. Couples looking for serene and unique romantic experiences can flock here.
- **Bora Bora, French Polynesia:** Famous for its luxurious and secluded resorts and stunning lagoon protected by a coral reef, Bora Bora is an indulgent place to visit. At the island's center rises Mount Otemanu, a dormant volcano that adds to the tropical and mysterious atmosphere.

No matter where couples go, the key to a memorable anniversary excursion lies in shared experiences. Taking the time to travel together is a unique way for couples to bond and celebrate their relationships.

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Did You Know?



Data from Zola and The Knot says the average wedding guest list typically ranges from 100 to 150 guests. But recently that number has hovered between 105 and 117 guests. The number of people who will be invited to a wedding will vary based on budget, location and wedding type. Anything between 75 and 150 guests is considered standard. Today's Bride says numbers are similar in Canada, with the average size of a Canadian wedding guest list coming in at around 135 people.

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Seeking donations

Knox Lutheran Cemetery (North) is seeking donations for maintenance and upkeep. Send them to the treasurer, Karen Tuft, 5995 46th Ave. NE, York, ND 58386

How to honor parents during wedding celebrations

Weddings are milestone moments for couples and their families. Weddings symbolize starting a new life as a couple, but also mark a great time to honor familial roots and traditions. Many couples aspire to honor certain family members in their weddings, and especially their parents. The following are various ways couples can honor their parents and incorporate them into their wedding day.

- **Processional walk:** The processional walk is a tradition in which the father of the bride walks her down the aisle. However, many couples now opt to modify this tradition to have both parents or even a step-parent or another special parental figure walk the bride down the aisle. This helps recognize the many people who may have contributed to the bride's upbringing.
- **Rose ceremony:** Couples can hand a single rose to their

mothers and grandmothers during a moment in the ceremony. This emotional gesture showcases love in front of all the guests, helping these special women feel recognized.

- **Vow exchange:** Officials may include a special “parents' vow” in the ceremony where parents can stand and support the couple in their new marriage. In a religious ceremony, parents may be able to symbolically renew their vows as they support their children.
- **Wearable history:** Honoring parents may come down to wearing a special memento during the celebration. A bride can choose to wear her mother's wedding gown, or to sew a piece of it into her own dress. Dad's favorite blue shirt can be worn or sewn into the lining of a gown or suit. Veils, shoes, jewelry, watches, and other heirlooms also can connect the couple to the family and the generations who came before.
- **Special speeches:** Although it's customary for the


maid of honor and best man to speak at the wedding reception, couples can honor their parents by asking them to offer some words of advice and support.

- **A legacy table:** Showcasing a visual family tree of sorts at the reception through framed wedding photos of the couple's parents and grandparents is a great conversation starter and a touching tribute.
- **Musical tributes:** The “first” dances are traditional options to put the spotlight on parents, but having the band or DJ play parents' own wedding songs can be a wonderful and heartfelt surprise. If any other songs are particularly meaningful to parents, those can be included in the ones played during the ceremony or reception.
- **Handwritten note:** Couples can write a short and meaningful letter to their parents, which can be opened the day after when parents may not be as preoccupied or emotional as they are on the day of the ceremony.

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Engstrom Entities Working with Lender on Path Forward

“We are aware of the foreclosure notice that was recently published. This publication was made as a formality on behalf of First International Bank & Trust, and we are actively working together to come to a mutually agreed-upon plan moving forward. As part of this process, we made the decision to take these steps to allow us more time and ensure all documentation—including loan documents, personal guarantees, and related information—is accurate and properly aligned as we move ahead.

“Our focus remains on maintaining normal operations, honoring our commitments, and positioning the business for continued success. We appreciate the support and understanding from our customers, partners, and community during this time.”

- Brian Engstrom



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