

PRAIRIE FARE

Smart and quick food safety during a refrigerator power outage

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"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%-40% of food, and much of it ends up in landfills. According to the U.S. 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.

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 U.S. 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 ("Refrigerated Food During Power



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

Outage Safety Chart") 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 saucepan 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) fat, 21 g protein, 43 g carbohydrate, 8 g fiber and 650 milligrams sodium.

DAKOTA ATTITUDE

Selling Beer for 10 Cents a Bottle

Calvin and Ilah Mae (Kronebusch) Lettenmaier
Interview: August 25, 2015
County: Barnes
City: Sanborn

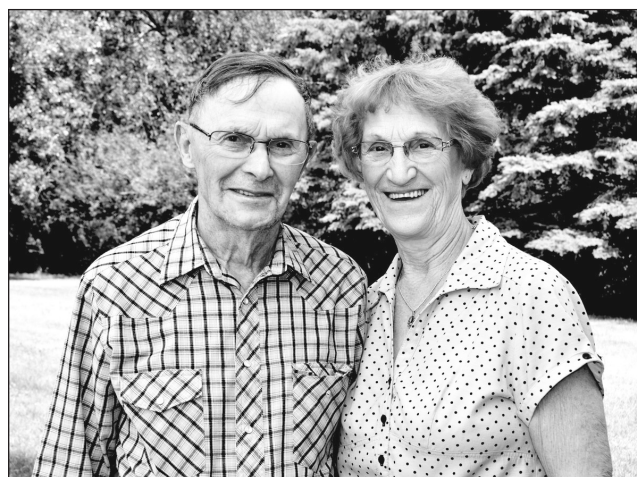
Both Calvin Lettenmaier and Ilah Mae Kronebusch grew up near Sanborn, during the hard times of the 1930s - he was born in 1927 and her in 1928.

"In the 1930s - '31 or '32 - my dad came home one morning. He'd went into the hardware store to get some parts, and he come home and he said, 'Bank's closed. The money is gone.' The guy got on the train and went west." Ilah Mae says, "Took the money."

Calvin says during the probation years, "We made beer at home and sold it on Sunday. Ten cents a quart. I used to wash beer bottles. My dad put the beer in it. I put the cap on. You weren't supposed to do it, but the people that made whiskey alcohol, they're the ones that got 90 days in jail. My dad started making alcohol, and Mother said, 'You better quit, because a couple of neighbors got caught.'"

When Calvin was 20 he took over the family farm, after his dad died in an airplane crash. "I had neighbors come before he was even buried. They wanted to farm it or buy it. One fellow looked over the place, told me I should paint the barn if he was gonna move in. I went in and told my mother, 'We got some creeps out here that want to start farming.' She told me, 'Get rid of them.'"

Ilah Mae studied hair dressing, then returned to Valley City to work as a beauty operator. When she married Calvin in 1948, she gave up her job and moved to the farm.



"It was a short career - let's see, about 18 months. In those years, when you married a farmer..."

Calvin and Ilah Mae raised seven children. She thinks growing up in rural North Dakota gave her children an advantage over town kids. "Just your work ethic, for one thing. If we told them to do something on the farm, they went out and did it. They didn't stand and pout and argue. They all knew how to work. I never really heard our kids say they were bored. They were either playing or working or eating or sleeping."

(Editor's Note: The following profiles of North Dakota residents were collected by author James Puppe between 2004-2018, covering 617 subjects and 113,000 miles. He has given permission for his book to be serialized in North Dakota Newspapers at no charge. To find out how you can read the entire collection of Dakota Attitude profiles go to dakotaattitude.com.)

REQUEST FOR BIDS

The Steele County Board of County Commissioner's would like to extend an invitation for gravel bids for the year of 2026. The roads to be graveled are:

CR 19: All - 7 miles West of Steele/Traill County Line to junction of CR 19 / CR 8

CR 10: 2 miles between ND Hwy 200 and CR 19

CR 6: 5 miles South of ND Hwy 200 to CR 11

CR 11: All - 9 miles West of Steele/Traill County Line

CR 1: 10.5 miles West of Steele/Traill County Line to ND Hwy 38

The total mileage to be graveled is approximately **33.5 miles**. The Steele County Commission will only be accepting gravel bids for **CRUSHED GRAVEL**. Gravel bids **MUST INCLUDE** pricing from Sibley and Fordville Pits. All other pits submitted for consideration will be subject to review by the Steele County Highway Superintendent before an award. Gravel bids **MUST ALSO INCLUDE** separate pricing from each of the pits for the Steele County Highway Department to load and haul gravel.

For maps, road information, and a bid packet, contact Matt Satrom, the Steele County Highway Department Superintendent by email at msatrom@nd.gov, or by phone at 701-789-0536 or on the Steele County website at www.steelecountynd.gov/bids.

In order to have these bids considered by the Commission, please submit all bids to the Steele County Highway Department Highway Superintendent, PO Box 291, Finley, ND 58230, by **12 PM Friday May 1, 2026**. The Steele County Commission will be awarding the bids during their regularly scheduled Commission Meeting on **Tuesday May 5, 2026 at 8:30 AM**. The Steele County Commission reserves the right to accept and/or reject any or all parts of the bid.