



Moldy Food – Throw it Away?

What are you growing in the back of your refrigerator? A fluffy little treat? Some mold?

What is the concern about mold?

Mold can be dangerous, causing allergic reactions and respiratory problems in some people. A few molds create mycotoxins, toxins which can make you sick.

Mold causes great economic losses, worldwide, in crops. It also affects and shortens food storage times in the home. Molds are microscopic fungi that live on plant and animal matter. Most molds have threadlike parts that extend into the food. The spores are transported by air, water or insects.

How can you tell if mold is dangerous?

You can't. There is such a variety of molds. Some mold toxins are dangerous even in small doses. Some survive for a long time in food. Some aren't even destroyed by cooking. So you can't always safely cut mold off food. The USDA Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS), however, does suggest cutting one inch around mold on hard cheeses and firm fruits and vegetables, prior to using. Avoid getting the knife into the mold, which could contaminate the remaining food. Soft foods with mold should be discarded except for cheeses made with mold as a part of the manufacturing process, e.g. Roquefort, blue, Gorgonzola, Stilton, Brie, and Camembert cheeses.

How can I prevent mold on foods?

- Cleanliness is something that can help prevent mold, just as it can reduce the risk of micro-organisms and pests in the kitchen.
- Avoid buying moldy food unintentionally. Look foods over closely before purchasing—the bottom and sides of packaged fruit, and baked items. Watch the pull-by and the expiration dates, if applicable.
- Protect food from contamination of mold spores in the air. Seal up the package and keep the foods refrigerated, if needed.
- Buy smaller amounts of food or freeze part of the food until needed.
- Freeze foods that might mold, until needed. Some foods can be frozen until needed. Refrigeration also retards mold growth.

Mold may be a “fun-gi”—but it’s not fun to bite into it, and some types of molds can cause serious illness. The good news is—you can see the mold and avoid it. It may appear as grey fur on meats, fuzzy green dots on breads, white dust on cheese, coin-size velvety circles on fruit, or furry growth on the surface of jellies.

Have additional questions about specific moldy foods?
Check the USDA-FSIS factsheet:
www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Molds_On_Food/index.asp or call
your Nutrition and Food Safety Extension Educator at your county
Extension office.



Source: Oregon State University

The Wyoming Food Safety Coalition (WFSC) is dedicated to preventing food borne illness. This collaborative program is sponsored by the University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service, Wyoming Beef Council, Department of Agriculture (WDA), Department of Health, Environmental Health Association, and Lodging and Restaurant Association. For information about food safety or the WFSC, please contact your local county Extension office, WDA Consumer Health Specialist, or City-County Health Department.

Source: Christine A. Pasley, University of Wyoming Extension Educator, Nutrition and Food Safety.

*Oregon State University Extension, <http://food.oregonstate.edu/misc/mold.html> ,
September 2010.*

*United States Department of Agriculture – Food Safety Inspection Service,
www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Molds_On_Food/index.asp.*