

Food Safety after a Flood

What can and cannot be kept?

From the Ohio Dept. of Agriculture

BOTTLED ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES, INCLUDING WINES AND WHISKEY - These will nearly always have either cork or screw top bottles and when found should be destroyed as it is usually contaminated under the cork cap. None of the stopper coverings so far in use are waterproof.

BEVERAGES, BEER, SOFT DRINKS - All beverages in bottles having crown caps whether carbonated or still must be destroyed.

BUTTER, CHEESE AND FATS - Butter, cheese or fats in small quantities should be destroyed

CANDY, CEREALS, BREAD AND CAKES, CHEWING GUMS, SALTED, SHELLED OR SHELL NUTS - These products are usually in paper boxes, in wrapped packages, or in glass and cannot be salvaged and should be destroyed

COFFEE - Coffee in sacks cannot be salvaged in any manner whatsoever whether it the bean or ground. Coffee in glass or metal containers must be handled as any other food similarly packaged.

DRIED FRUIT - Dried fruit cannot be salvaged for any purpose. The fruit, of course, will absorb water and be subject to quick decomposition.

EGGS - SHELL - There is no method of salvaging shell eggs. They should be broken and destroyed.

FLOUR - Flour in barrels or sacks cannot be salvaged for human food.

FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES - Practically none of these foods can be salvaged after submersion in flood water. This is particularly true of such foods as lettuce, cabbage, celery, and any other foods which will be used in the raw state. Such fruits as apples, peaches, plums, grapes cannot be salvaged and must be destroyed.

FRUIT JARS, CANS, BOTTLES - These may be salvaged by thorough washing and sanitizing. Some types of cans are not easy to clean and the cost of salvage may not be justified.

CANNED GOODS - Canned goods when flooded may be salvaged for human consumption by scrubbing the cans in strong soap suds, removing all of the silt from the surface of the can after having removed the labels. The can is then rinsed thoroughly and dipped in a solution of chlorine of 100 parts per million. The can should then be air dried or wiped dry with clean cloths.

The only type of cans that can be treated are:

1. The Hermetically sealed tin can in which most canned foods are packed.
2. The type of can with a key, when the key is removed and key tab is lifted to clean underneath.
3. A can which sometimes may be salvaged with careful supervision is a metal can such as is used for cooking oil or syrup that has a turnable spout. This can is salvaged by the removal of the metal spout and discarding of it in order to remove any silt that may be under the spout.

FOODS IN GLASS CONTAINER - As mentioned above any bottled foods with cork stopper or glass and cork stoppers were found to be contaminated on the interior when submerged in flood water. Such bottles usually contain catsups, vinegar, condiments. No type of closure used on glass food containers has been found safe for submersion in flood waters. Home canned foods except in hermetically sealed metal cans are not salvageable.

BEANS, DRIED AND WHEAT/GRAINS - beans, wheat and whole unprocessed grains may not be salvaged for human use and may start sprouting or destroying the containers in which they are stored.

JELLIES, JAMS AND PRESERVES - PEANUT BUTTER AND MAYONNAISE - These products are nearly always packed in glasses with a screw friction or vacuum type lid. The type with the vacuum lid may be salvaged. No attempt should be made to salvage foods packed in glass no matter what the type of closure by merely washing and then giving them a chlorine dip.

KRAUT AND PICKLES - All kraut and pickles in process of manufacturing when exposed to flood water must be destroyed.

MEAT - Fresh, smoked, salted or other meat except canned cannot be salvaged for human food. Meat in the process of pickling or curing when the containers have been submerged in flood water cannot be salvaged for human use.

MISCELLANEOUS FOOD, ICE CREAM, FISH, ETC. - These are foods which must be destroyed and have no salvage value, except in such quantities as will make the salvageable fat of some value.

SPICES - The type of containers in which spices are usually shipped are such as to permit contamination with flood water and all spices must be destroyed.

SALT, SUGAR, DRIED MILK, POWDERED EGGS - In most cases if the flood waters have come over the barrels or sacks the sugar or salt has been dissolved and the dried products damaged and there is no solution short of destruction.

SYRUP, MOLASSES, HONEY - The types of containers in which syrup, molasses and honey, are packed are usually of such character that it is necessary to destroy the product.

SOAP - Soap flakes in boxes are usually dissolved if submerged for any length of time. They are not salvageable and contaminated soap flakes or soap should not be used for cleaning purposes after the flood waters recede.