

# Keeping School Milk Tasting Good

## Receive milk at 40°F or less

Milk delivered at the proper temperature will stay fresher longer. Cold temperatures slow or prevent the growth of the harmless bacteria that cause milk spoilage and reduce the likelihood of other flavor defects. The warmer milk can get during deliveries and subsequent handling, the longer it takes to cool it back down to proper storage temperatures. When milk is received at your school, ensure that it is immediately placed in cold storage in a clean environment and that it is protected from excessive exposure to light.

## Store milk between 34°F and 38°F

Milk stays fresher and tastes best longest and will often be of good quality beyond the “sell-by date” if maintained at these temperatures. At warmer temperatures, spoilage bacteria are more likely to grow, shortening the practical shelf-life of the product. **Keep milk cold at all times;** do not display milk unrefrigerated for periods that allow it to warm above the recommended temperatures and always return unused containers of milk promptly to the refrigerator.

## Protect milk from light

Strong sunlight and fluorescent light can cause off-flavors in milk and destroy vitamins. This is more likely to occur when milk is packaged in clear materials. When unloading deliveries, minimize the time milk is in direct sunlight and store milk in the cooler and serving areas where light exposure is minimal.



## Maintain a clean refrigerator or cooler

Odors from fruits, vegetables, and/or unclean conditions can pass through milk containers and be absorbed into the milk. Odors from onions and other strong-smelling foods, and even the smell of a dirty cooler, can be easily absorbed. Ideally, milk should be stored in a separate, clean refrigerator or cooler.

## Rotate stocks and use milk promptly

Milk received first should be used first, commonly referred to as:

*“first-in, first-out”*

Place new supplies at the rear of the refrigerator so that the stock can be rotated properly, and milk will not be held beyond its sell-by date. While properly held milk should still be acceptable at or even beyond its sell-by date, milk does not improve with age and will not be as fresh tasting. Order and rotate the stock so that all milk is sold and consumed well before its sell-by date, ideally with several days to spare.



## Serve milk at 40°F or colder

A common complaint of both school children and adults is that warm milk tastes bad. Milk in serving lines should be maintained below 40°F.



**At room temperature, half-pint milk cartons of milk can warm up by 10°F in 20 minutes.** Keep milk well refrigerated on the serving lines and return unused cartons or portions of milk to the storage refrigerator or cooler promptly.

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## ***MILK – BUY IT FRESH, KEEP IT COLD, AND PROTECT IT FROM LIGHT***

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Want more information on [school milk](#) and the MQIP? Contact Nicole Martin ([nicole.martin@cornell.edu](mailto:nicole.martin@cornell.edu)) in the Milk Quality Improvement Program or visit our website

<https://foodsafety.foodscience.cornell.edu/mqip/>

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