How to store garlic so it lasts as long as possible

By Food Network Kitchen

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Keep those heads — and even single cloves — fresh with these tips. *chengyuzheng/Getty Images*

Garlic is often thought of as an ingredient you can keep around indefinitely. Some people hang braids of garlic for months — and longer. But how should you store garlic to maximize its use, and how long is it good for?

One of the most commonly used ingredients, garlic helps to form the base of many dishes as a flavor builder. You can easily buy it in bulk for cost effectiveness, and luckily, with the right storage, it will last for a while. Here are some easy-to-follow tips for extending the life of your garlic, plus some added ideas for using up any surplus you may have on hand.

How Long Does Garlic Last?

Properly stored, a whole head of garlic can last for up to six months. Unpeeled cloves can last for three to four weeks.

How to Make Garlic Last Longer

Follow these quick tips:

- Don't buy garlic in bulk. Stick to a couple heads of garlic.
- Buy tight heads of garlic with minimal loose papery skin.
- Store it correctly (read on below).

Store Whole Heads of Garlic at Room Temperature

Garlic is typically sold by the head (also called the bulb). It's best to store whole heads of garlic instead of breaking them apart into the garlic cloves because the papery exterior will keep the cloves inside fresher for longer. Store whole heads in a wire basket or open paper bag so there is plenty of air circulation, then place the container in a dry, dark location, such as the back of your pantry or tucked under a cabinet on the counter. Sunlight of any kind will change the temperature and humidity in the environment, which will encourage produce (garlic included) to ripen more quickly and go bad sooner.

Store Peeled Garlic In the Fridge

If you have separated or peeled cloves of garlic, store in an airtight container and refrigerate for up to a week. Any chopped/minced garlic you have should be used ASAP.

Store Minced Garlic In the Freezer

Garlic does store well in the freezer, losing only its crunchy bite. In other words, frozen garlic is for cooking.

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To freeze, peel garlic and mince it up. This is the perfect time to whip out your food processor to chop up a bunch at a time.

You can either freeze it in its raw state or toss it in a neutral-flavored oil (such as olive or vegetable), which will help to preserve it and prevent freezer burn.

Portion out the minced garlic in ice cube trays, stick them in the freezer for at least 3 hours, then transfer to containers for storage. While you can store the cubes in resealable freezer bags, it's probably best to use canning jars or an air-tight container that will keep the pungent smell from overtaking your entire freezer. For more info on freezing garlic, check out our story How to Freeze Onions and Garlic.

Does Garlic Go Bad?

If you notice the cloves start to sprout, you can still use them, but get to them quickly. Cut the cloves in half and remove the germ. It's yellow-ish white when young and sprouts a green shoot as it ages.

But garlic does go bad, and here's how to tell that's happened. If the clove itself is brown or the head softens, it should be discarded.

How to Use Up Garlic

If you have a surplus of garlic, try roasting it! Cut 1/2-inch from the top of a whole head of garlic to expose the cloves, then drizzle with 1 teaspoon of olive oil, and season with a pinch of salt and pepper. Wrap the garlic in aluminum foil and bake at 350 degrees F until caramelized and tender, 45 to 55 minutes. Allow the garlic to cool slightly, then squeeze the cloves out of their papery skin. You can use roasted garlic in dressings, homemade hummus, or simply shmeared on bread.

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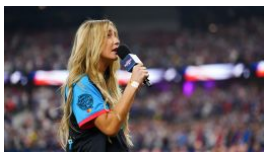

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