

WSGW RADIO PRESENTATION

Luck of the Irish - Corned Beef and Cabbage

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St. Patrick's Day is approaching and along with it comes lots of questions about corned beef: How do you prepare it? How can you tell when it's safely cooked? How long can you store it?

While a traditional dinner of corned beef and cabbage may bring you the "luck of the Irish," you can't rely on good luck to ensure that your food is safe.

Corned beef gets its name from the large chunks or corns of salt used to cure it. Pellets of salt, sometimes the size of corn kernels, were rubbed into the beef to keep it from spoiling and to preserve it. Today, brining or the use of salt water has replaced the dry salt cure.

Package Dating and Storage Times:

If you buy uncooked corned beef in a pouch with pickling juices which has a "sell-by" date or no date, you may store it for 5 to 7 days in the refrigerator, unopened. If you buy products with a "use-by" date, you may store it unopened in the refrigerator until that date.

An uncooked corned beef brisket may be frozen for 1 month for best quality if you drain and re-wrap it. It is recommended to drain the brine because salt may encourage rancidity and texture changes. The flavor and texture may diminish with prolonged freezing, but the product is safe.

Preparation:

Corned beef is made from one of several less tender cuts of beef such as the brisket, rump or round. Therefore, it requires long, moist cooking. It can be cooked on top of the stove or in the oven, microwave, or slow cooker. The USDA does not recommend one particular cooking method as best, but whatever method you use, make sure that the corned beef reaches a safe minimum internal temperature of 160° F or above.

Cooking Ahead and Leftovers:

It's safe to cook corned beef ahead of time. After cooking, cut it into several pieces for faster cooling, or slice it if you like. Place the beef in shallow containers and cool it in the refrigerator.

Leftover corned beef should be sliced and refrigerated promptly — within 2 hours of cooking or reheating. Use cooked-ahead or leftover corned beef within 3 to 4 days or freeze 2 to 3 months.

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