



# Food Safety & Nutrition

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## Gifts In the Mailbox

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Giving and receiving food packages in the mail for the holidays can be fun, festive and exciting. When mailing food gifts you must consider how well the product will travel and safety. Will the items remain in good condition during the trip and arrive in one piece? If sending perishable foods, will the items still be safe to eat when they reach the recipient?

In general foods that are good choices to mail for friends and family include nut breads, pound cakes, bar cookies, brownies, drop cookies, dried foods, spices and nuts, hard candies, caramels and fudge and dry mixes (beverage mixes, herb blends, party mixes). These food items usually can handle a bumpy trip and will not mold or become unsafe to eat in the 3-5 days travel time.

Foods that are moist like applesauce cakes, pumpkin bread, soft cakes and cookies that are safe at room temperature for several days may have trouble traveling more than 3-4 days. They may mold if the delivery time is 4 days or more and they are not opened and consumed immediately. If you plan to send these kinds of products refrigerate or freeze them, wrap them well and send express mail or priority mail that can be delivered within 2-3 days. Then contact the recipient and let them know a food gift is on its way, and to open the box and enjoy.

Poor food choices to send via mail include delicate cakes, pies, yeast breads and brittle cookies, such as thin sugar cookies, meringue drops, or thin wafers. These kinds of food will not arrive in one piece or may dry out. Foods with moist fillings or frostings could become sticky; and oily items can weaken the container if they soak through the package. Also avoid any products in glass containers if possible.

Perishable foods like soft cheeses, meats and smoked fish are not recommended to send through the mail. If you intend to send perishable foods, they will need to be cooled or frozen and then sent in a cooler with ice or a gel pack or in a container with dry ice.

If you are sending gifts overseas to relatives or to military friends and family then it is best to limit your choices to dry mixes, canned products, hard candies, sturdy cookies, spice mixes and sauces. Avoid anything fragile, moist or in glass containers

If you are not sure how well a food will travel well, test it. Wrap the product well and place the food in a container and shake it a few times. If it holds its shape, it should mail well.

When getting ready to mail the food gift you will need a heavy, durable cardboard box for the outer container and a plastic, metal or cardboard container to fit inside the outer box. This will allow for insulation and cushion to protect the food products. Line the base of the inner and outer containers with crumpled paper, plastic wrap, or Styrofoam pellets. Layer the food products in the containers and place crumpled paper or plastic wrap around the food items and around the containers. Make sure the containers and products don't move around.

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When mailing the gift, be sure identify what is in the package. This is to let the mailing service know how to send it to get it there in the best shape and quickest. If the package contains perishable foods, they will want to send in overnight or express. If it contains products that cannot go by air, they would want to be sure it goes ground.

Below are some recipes for products that should taste good and mail well. Enjoy!

## Ginger Crackles

Yield: 3 ½ dozen

¾ cup shortening	1 cup sugar
1 egg	¼ cup molasses
2 cups flour	1 t. cinnamon
2 t. baking soda	¼ t salt
2 t. ground ginger	1 t. ground cloves
2-4 T sugar for rolling	

Pre-heat oven to 350 degrees.

Cream together shortening and sugar. Beat in egg and molasses. In a separate bowl, combine all dry ingredients and then add to wet mixture. Shape into 1" balls and roll in sugar. Place 2" apart on greased cookie sheets. Bake for 8-10 minutes. Do not over cook.

## Blueberry Pound Cake

Yield 8 servings

1 cup butter, softened	1 cup sugar
4 eggs	1t vanilla
½ t salt	¼ t ground nutmeg
1 ½ cups flour	1 cup blueberries
¼ cup chopped pecans	

Preheat oven at 325 degrees.

In a large bowl, beat together butter and sugar at medium speed until light and fluffy. Add eggs, vanilla, salt and nutmeg. Beat until thoroughly blended. Reduce mixer speed to low and add flour, ½ cup at a time, beating just until blended. Gently fold in blueberries and pecans. Spread evenly in greased and floured 9X5X3 loaf pan. Bake for about 60-70 minutes or until cake springs back or toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean. Cool on wire rack for 10 minutes. Remove from pan and cool completely.

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