

Mailing Food Tips



Food is a popular holiday gift. It can be sent safely in the mail if carefully chosen, well packaged and delivered in a timely manner.

Foods Good for Mailing

- Foods that ship well include pound cakes, cookies high in sugar and shortening, bar cookies, brownies, and fudge. Shortbread, sugar cookies and nut bars ship well. Avoid cookies with perishable fillings such as cream or custard. Fruit and nut fillings work best. Soft, moist cookies will mold quickly in humid climates.
- Coffee blends are easy to pack into decorative plastic or metal containers and ship.
- Dried foods, nuts and dry mixes (spiced teas, herb blends, and party mixes of cereals and nuts) are good choices.
- Delicate cakes that crumb easily, pies and yeast breads are fragile and spoil easily.
- If sending a cake, do not frost before mailing. If frosting is desired, include a package of dry frosting mix or commercially canned frosting in the package. (Do not mail aerosol cans.)

Remember Basic Food Safety

- Think about including safe food handling instructions with your gift, if needed.
- Make sure that a perishable food item can stay cold at or below 40°F while in transit; use insulated packaging material such as foam, ice packs, frozen gel packs and/or dry ice if necessary.

This a good time to mention that when you receive a perishable, refrigerator food. . .

- Make sure it is still at or below 40°F; if not, discard. If it is still at temperature, refrigerate or freeze immediately. Check labels of commercially packaged foods to see if the item should have been kept refrigerated during shipping.
- Check foods for signs of spoilage such as mold or off-odors regardless of temperature at receiving.
- Check packaging for any tears, holes, signs of pests, or stain from being dripped on.

For more information on the safety of mailed foods, see the USDA FSIS publication:
http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Mail_Order_Food_Safety/index.asp

When sending food to military troops

- Consider the weather conditions where the recipient is located -- how cold, how dry, how hot and humid, etc. -- and how the food item you are shipping will hold up.
- Do not pack food in glass containers or place glass items in with food.
- Aerosols are not allowed.
- Do not send fresh, cured or smoked meat, pork or pork by-products, and poultry.
- Dry beef, such as beef jerky or beef slims, is safe to ship.
- Consider commercially processed, durable foods such as canned foods with pop top lids like tuna, chicken, and franks and beans.
- Commercially packed cakes and cookies in tins, fruit cakes and dry cookies like ginger snaps and crackers will hold up well in many weather conditions.
- Microwavable soups, macaroni and cheese, brownie mix and popcorn are items often requested by military personnel.
- Raisins, apricots and other dried fruits, canned nuts and fruit and commercially prepared and packaged trail mix, as well as, shelf stable pudding cups are good choices for mailing.
- Individually wrapped cereal, protein, granola, energy bars, chips, and cakes are also recommended as food gifts for varying weather conditions.
- Families and friends who wish to mail food gifts to service members should send them directly to the addresses provided by the military postal service.

The Mailing



- When choosing a box, make sure it is roomy enough to allow plenty of packing material on all sides.
- Start filling your mailing box with a layer of packing material such as newspaper, foam pieces or plastic bubble wrap. Center the gift in the middle of the mailing box. Then overfill the box with cushioning material, making sure there's no air space left in the box.
- Do not use popped corn or puffed cereal as cushioning packing material, as they attract insects.
- The food gift can be placed in clean boxes, metal food tins or plastic boxes or bags.
- If packaging a cake, use a container that is only slightly larger than the cake.
- If packaging cookies in the gift container, wrap flat cookies in pairs (back to back) with waxed paper between them and foil or plastic wrap around them. For cookies that are not flat, wrap individually. Put crumpled wax paper or padding in the bottom of the container to cushion cookies. If cookies are layered, put waxed paper between the layers. Put heaviest cookies on the bottom and the lightest ones on top.
- Bar cookies and brownies are best packed uncut in the baking pan, or a box the size of the baking pan.
- Jars and bottles can be shipped within the U.S., but the U.S. Postal Service requires that they have screw tops or locking lid devices. Use plenty of absorbent packing material (news-paper, mover's packing paper or paper towels) in the mailing box to absorb the liquid in case the jars break or leak. Remember; do not ship food overseas in glass containers.

For more details, mailing deadlines at holiday times, and "Supporting the Troops" through mailed gifts, visit the U.S. Postal Service:

www.usps.gov *and* www.usps.com/communications/newsroom/localnews/ky/2009/ky_2009_1029a.htm

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