

Storing Garlic at Home

Caution: Research performed by the National Center for Home Food Preservation confirmed that mixtures of garlic in oil stored at room temperature are at risk for the development of botulism.

Garlic-in-oil should be made fresh and stored in the refrigerator at 40°F or lower for no more than 7 days.



Regardless of its flavor potency, garlic is a low-acid vegetable. The pH of a clove of garlic typically ranges from 5.3 to 6.3. As with all low-acid vegetables, garlic will support the growth and subsequent toxin production of the bacterium *Clostridium botulinum* when given the right conditions. The conditions include improper home canning and improper preparation and storage of fresh herb and garlic-in-oil mixtures. Moisture, room temperature, lack of oxygen, and low-acid conditions all favor the growth of *Clostridium botulinum*. When growing, this bacterium produces an extremely potent toxin that causes the illness botulism. If untreated, death can result within a few days of consuming the toxic food. It is important to follow science-based directions to make sure your preserved garlic is safe.

Room Temperature Storage

Commercially, garlic is stored near 32°F. Most home refrigerators are too warm for long-term storage of garlic. Instead, store it in a cool, dry, well-ventilated place in well-ventilated containers such as mesh bags. Storage life is 3 to 5 months in a cool (60°F), dry, dark location.

Freezing Garlic

Garlic can be frozen in a number of ways.

1. Chop garlic, seal tightly in plastic freezer bag, freeze.
2. Freeze garlic unpeeled in glass jars or plastic freezer boxes. Remove cloves as needed.
3. Peel cloves and puree with oil in a blender or food processor using 2 parts oil to 1 part garlic. Puree will stay soft enough in freezer to remove small amounts to use in sautéing. Freeze this mixture immediately—do not store at room temperature. The combination of low-acid garlic and room-temperature storage can support the growth of *Clostridium botulinum*.

Canning Garlic

Canning of garlic is not recommended. Because it is a low-acid food it would require pressure canning to be properly processed. Garlic processed this way would lose most of its flavor. No processing times have been determined to safely can garlic.

Storing Garlic in Wine or Vinegar

Peeled cloves may be submerged in wine or vinegar and stored in the refrigerator for about 4 months. Discard both the cloves and the liquid if there are signs of mold or yeast growth on the surface of the wine or vinegar. The garlic-flavored liquid and garlic cloves may be used as flavorings for food. Do not store the mixture at room temperature because it will rapidly develop mold growth.

Sources: University of California, Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Pub. 7231, 11/97 at <http://ucanr.org/freepubs/docs/7231.pdf> and the National Center for Home Food Preservation, <http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/how/freeze.html>
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