



Family and Consumer Science News

STRENGTHENING OKLAHOMA FAMILIES

January 2026

The power is out – how long will food be safe?

Severe weather is as much a part of Oklahoma's history as the Land Run of 1889. Residents are familiar with tornadoes, ice storms, wildfires, blizzards, floods and more. When Mother Nature unleashes her wrath, Oklahomans know to be prepared.

The first tornado of 2026 has already been recorded. Being in the middle of the winter season, there's still plenty of time for other weather calamities that cause power outages. Sometimes the outages are short-lived – other times there's no power for hours or days at a time. Christi Evans, Oklahoma State University Extension food safety specialist, has tips to help people know when to keep or toss the contents of the refrigerator and freezer.

"The first thing I recommend is to have an appliance thermometer in your refrigerator and freezer at all times to help ensure food safety," she said. "Proper refrigerator temperature is 40 degrees Fahrenheit or below, and 0 degrees Fahrenheit or below for freezers."

With advanced weather technology, consumers have ample warning of potential stormy weather that could result in power outages. If there are foods in the refrigerator that can be frozen, move them to the freezer ahead of the storm.

Once the power goes out, Evans recommends keeping the refrigerator and freezer doors closed. Don't open them any more than necessary. The temperature in the refrigerator should hold at 40 F for about four hours. If the power is out for an extended period and the temperature stays above 40 F for more than two hours, most of the food in the refrigerator should be discarded to prevent foodborne illness.

Discard raw or leftover meat, salads, lunchmeat, soft cheeses, shredded cheese, milk, yogurt, eggs and most salad dressings. Keep hard cheeses, bread, tortillas, jelly and uncut fresh fruits and vegetables. More information about what to keep or discard is available online.

A full freezer should last about two days. If the power outage extends beyond that, as long as the food has ice crystals and feels cold, it can safely be refrozen. Food that thaws completely and over 40 F must be discarded.

"Fill plastic gallon jugs with water and keep them in the freezer to take up space," Evans said. "If the electricity goes off, the jugs of ice will help maintain freezer temperature. Also, if you're on well water, the jugs can be used for drinking water since the well pump isn't working."

If it looks like the power outage will last a while, put food in an ice chest and add ice packs to help keep the temperature cold inside. Including an appliance thermometer in the ice chest can help monitor the temperature to ensure it stays below 40 F.

Evans said it's always a good idea to keep shelf-stable food on hand in the event of a power outage. Canned meats, vegetables and fruit are good to have in the pantry. Also, peanut butter and dried milk will keep the family fed while power is being restored.

"Groceries are expensive, but trying to salvage foods after an extended power outage isn't a good idea," she said. "When in doubt, throw it out."

OSU Extension offers more information online about [food safety during power outages](#).

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North Region OHCE District Meeting.

I hope your OHCE group is planning to attend. This meeting provides an excellent opportunity for North Region members to connect, share ideas, and participate in high-quality workshops.

The North Region is also seeking a nominee for the North Region District Representative. This position is a two-year term on the State OHCE Board and includes assisting host counties with planning and hosting the 2027 and 2028 North Region District meetings.

If you know of an OHCE member who may be interested in serving in this leadership role, please share the attached application with them. Completed applications must be submitted to the State Nomination Chair, Kathy Fentress, by February 1.

If you and a prospective nominee have questions about the position, Sheila Blankenship or I would be happy to visit with you.

District OHCE meeting registration due by March 2, 2026, to the Dewey County Extension office. Registration should be collected by the county Treasurer and submitted by this deadline.



Life is A Picnic with OHCE
Host Counties
Dewey, Ellis, and Woodward

2026 West District Meeting North Region
Saturday, March 28, 2026
Seiling High School, 100 N. Elm, Seiling, OK
Registration: \$30

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New Ideas for Waffle Irons

1. One Minute Waffle Iron Baked Apples

Ingredients:

- Non-stick cooking spray
- As many apples as you want, sliced to just over 1/4" thick
- Small sprinkle of sugar for each apple slice, optional

Instructions:

- Heat Waffle Iron
- Spray with non-stick spray
- Optionally rub both sides of apple slices with a little sugar. This isn't necessary but it does make them look better because the sugar caramelizes.
- Place on apple slice in each section of the waffle iron
- Close the waffle iron and cook for about a minute or until the apples look waffled.

2. Waffle Brownies

A batch of yummie brownies without the oven? Yes! I have a feeling Your grandkids would be all over this. Why not save a little energy (and wasted heat in the summer time) when you can just bake them in your waffle iron? Just about any brownie mix will work but you want one that is a little dry so that it will cook well. Add strawberries and cool whip and Oh My!

3. Scrambled Eggs

And, what better to go with bacon than scrambled eggs? I've done this many times and it works like a charm. However, I like to do it a little more omelet style by adding chopped peppers and ham. Bacon bits, onion, or any other breakfast goodies would be good, too.

4. Waffled Cinnamon Rolls

Cinnamon Rolls with a twist! This is probably one of the most popular new ways to cook cinnamon rolls, partly because they turn out amazing. They also cook in less than 3 minutes this way as opposed to 15 or so minutes in the oven.

5. Waffled Egg Sandwich

Even Better, how about a waffled fried egg sandwich? Croissant dough can be used in the iron the same way you would cook a waffle, with the egg cooked afterwards without closing the lid to get it sunny side up style.

6. Waffle Iron Panini

If a panini press can do it, so can a waffle iron, right? It's pretty much the same concept except for the deeper grooves. Instead of spraying the iron I would just butter up the bread real well.

Why not try a hot ham and cheese sandwich or hot roast beef with Swiss cheese?

Other ideas—Waffled Hashbrowns, Waffle Iron Corn Bread, Waffled Cake, Puffle (stuffed waffle made from store-bought puff pastry, filled with chocolate) or Quesadillas. So many things to try, simply use your imagination.

Resources used: "Will It Waffle? 53 Irresistible and Unexpected Recipes to Make in a Waffle Iron" by Daniel Shumski, "Waffles at Grandma's" by Holly J. Williams, "Everything on a Waffle" by Polly Horvath, "Waffles Sweet Savory Simple" by Dawn Yanagihara, "Waffles sweet & savory recipes for every meal" by Tara Duggan.



CALENDAR

Co. & Local Reports Due	February 1, 2026
W. Dist. OHCE Mtg Registration Deadline	March 2, 2026
West District OHCE Meeting.....	March 28, 2026
OHCE Week	May 4-9, 2026
OHCE State Meeting	July 12-14, 2026
OHCE State Board Meeting	April 23, 2026

Newsletter Editor:

Connie McMinn

Extension Administration Support Staff

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Oklahomans be their best.

www.OHCE.okstate.edu



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