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## What food can I bring into the U.S. (fruit, cheese, meat, etc)?

### Question

Can I bring in food as a traveler (fruit, cheese, meat, etc)? The information in this answer does not apply to food being sent to the U.S. through the mail, courier services or other means.

### Answer

Many fruits and vegetables are either prohibited from entering the United States or require an import permit (for commercial importers) or a phytosanitary certificate from the country of origin. Every fruit or vegetable must be declared to a CBP Officer and must be presented for inspection - no matter how free of pests it appears to be. Failure to declare food products can result in a \$10,000 fine. See special guidelines for produce from Canada below.

Meats, livestock, poultry, and their products are either prohibited or restricted from entering the United States, depending on the animal disease condition in the country of origin. Fresh meat is generally prohibited from most countries. Canned, cured, or dried meat is severely restricted from some countries. See special guidelines for animal products from Canada below, and our Q&A on meat, poultry and swine products for a more complete discussion of food items from those sources.

Bakery items, candy, chocolate, and cured cheese are generally admissible. Canned goods and goods in vacuum packed jars (other than those containing meat or poultry products) are also generally admissible if being imported for personal use.

Dairy items such as milk, yogurt, butter are generally admissible, although this is subject to change, depending on disease outbreaks. Eggs may be admissible, although frequent outbreaks of Exotic Newcastles Disease and avian flu make it very likely that they will be denied entry. Hard cured cheese such as parmesan or cheddar are generally admissible, soft cheeses such as brie and soft curd cheese and cheese in water (ricotta, feta, etc.) are not.

Cooked and raw poultry is now allowed from Canada.

Fish, if it is for your personal use, is generally admissible.

Condiments such as oil, vinegar, mustard, catsup, pickles, syrup, honey, jelly, jam, etc., are generally admissible.

Fruits and vegetables grown in Canada are generally admissible, if they have labels identifying them as products of Canada. Fruits and vegetables merely purchased in Canada are not necessarily admissible, ie. citrus or tropical fruits such as mangos, which clearly were not grown in Canada because it does not have a climate that supports those crops. (Potatoes from western regions of Canada are currently restricted because of a disease outbreak. While commercial imports are permitted under stringent guidelines, travelers from Canada should avoid bringing raw potatoes with them into the US).

Currently NO RUMINANT PRODUCTS FROM CANADA MAY ENTER THE U.S. without a permit. This includes frozen, cooked, canned or otherwise processed beef, lamb, and veal. Hunter harvested game is admissible from Canada for the traveler's personal use if accompanied with a permit. For more information on hunter harvested game visit the [USDA website](#).

Pork and pork products are not admissible from Mexico.

Other than the above general guidelines, it is impossible to advise you in this forum about the admissibility of specific food items because it is so susceptible to change. Disease and pest outbreaks, which impact the admissibility status of fresh and packaged food items, occur all over the world at a moments notice.

Failure to declare all food products can result in civil penalties.

Because CBP inspectors are stationed at ports of entry and along our land and sea borders, they are often called upon to enforce laws and requirements of other government agencies. Because of the complexities of regulations governing the importation of food, CBP officers may need to contact an expert for information about what is or is not admissible. If no expert is available, food may be detained in the interest of preventing possible food-borne diseases into the U.S. This is done to protect community health, preserve domestic plant and animals life, etc.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture establishes criteria for the admissibility of plant, dairy and meat products returning with travelers and they have the final say about what may be admitted into the U.S. The USDA web site: [Click on Travelers' Tips](#) has somewhat more detailed information for travelers, and they can be contacted at 301-734-8896 for information about the admissibility of plant or plant products.