Pack glass food containers upright for a holiday potluck trip

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An upright-packing diagram that shows padding and frozen cold packs around glass containers in an insulated carrier, plus a trip log for the time food spends out of the refrigerator.

What you need

- Intact glass food containers and correctly fitted lids
- Insulated carrier and frozen cold packs
- Folded towels or other padding to separate the containers
- Food thermometer and contents labels

Steps

1. Check the closures

Use intact food-storage containers and properly fitted lids; set aside any glass with chips or cracks. Chill perishable food to 40°F (4°C) or below before packing. Record contents, preparation date and destination on the trip log.

2. Pack upright and cushion

Place containers upright in a suitable insulated carrier, heaviest dishes lowest. Put padding between glass sides and under any second layer, and frozen cold packs along the sides and over the lids. Do not rely on a leak-proof claim as permission to carry containers on their side.

3. Secure the trip

Keep the carrier stable and use frozen cold packs to keep chilled food at 40°F (4°C) or below. Check with a food thermometer and refrigerate promptly on arrival. USDA FSIS: “Throw away all perishable foods that have been left in room temperature for more than 2 hours (1 hour if the temperature is over 90° F, such as at an outdoor picnic during summer).”

4. Log the time out

Write when each dish left the refrigerator, when it arrived, how long it stood on the serving table and when it went back into a refrigerator, so you can check the applicable limit: two hours at room temperature, or one hour above 90°F.

Tips

- Follow the linked USDA FSIS leftovers guidance for time and temperature limits. A diagram does not establish temperature; use enough cold packs and check the food temperature with a thermometer.
- Check the exact glass set capacities and whether piece counts include lids. Avoid thermal shock; lids have separate use limits.
- Original editorial idea; a popular product is not a guarantee of suitability or results.

Notice

Original AI editorial illustration depicting a design concept; review manufacturer specifications and product details for final suitability. Exact color, fit, performance and pictured accessories are not established by the image.

Sources

USDA leftovers and food-safety guidance

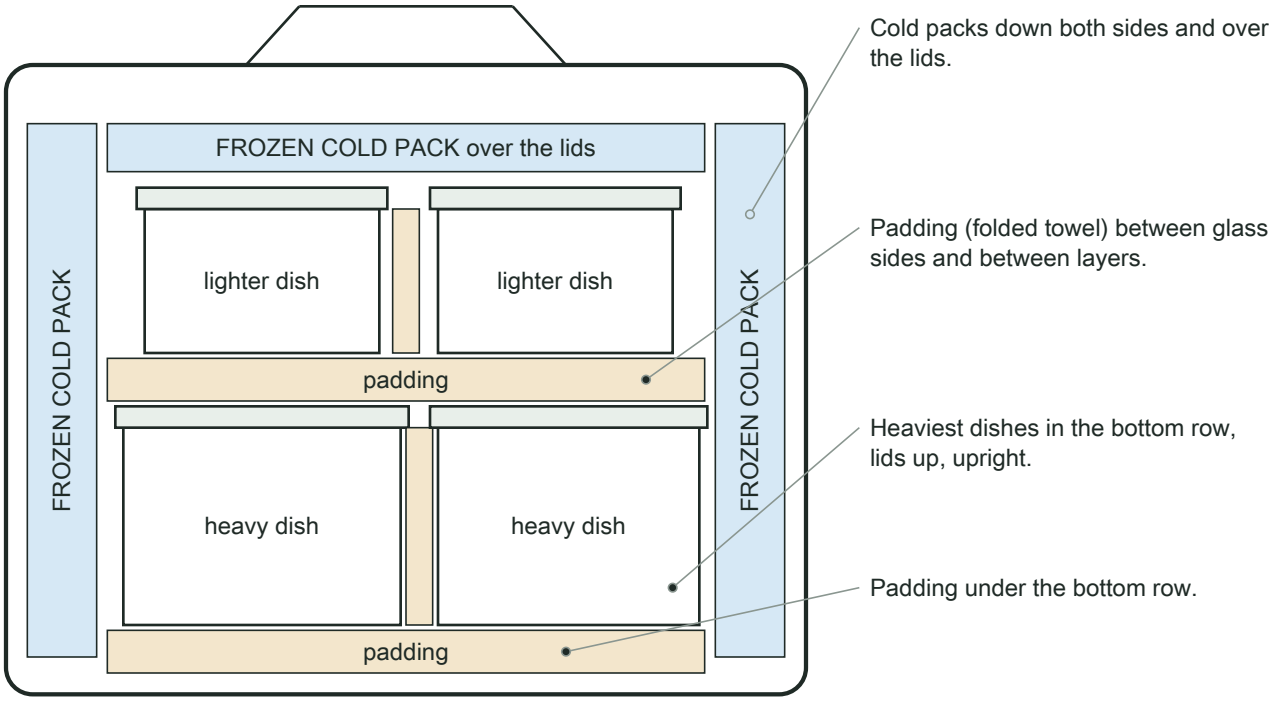
https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/leftovers-and-food-safety

USDA FSIS gives the 40°F cold-holding limit and the 2-hour (1 hour over 90°F) room-temperature rule. It does not cover packing glass; the packing layout is FigureNook guidance.

Full guide: https://figurenook.com/guides/pack-glass-food-containers-upright-for-a-holiday-potluck-trip/

Upright-packing diagram

Side view of an insulated carrier. FigureNook packing guidance: upright, padded, heaviest lowest, cold packs on the sides and over the lids.



USDA FSIS room-temperature rule (quoted)
“Throw away all perishable foods that have been left in room temperature for more than 2 hours (1 hour if the temperature is over 90° F, such as at an outdoor picnic during summer).”

Before you leave

- ☐ Glass checked for chips or cracks
- ☐ Lids fitted and latched
- ☐ Food at 40°F (4°C) or below (thermometer)
- ☐ Cold packs frozen solid
- ☐ Food thermometer packed
- ☐ Refrigerator space arranged at the destination

Trip log

One row per dish. Room-temperature time (for example on the serving table) counts toward the USDA FSIS 2-hour limit (1 hour if the temperature is over 90°F).

Dish	Temp before packing	Left fridge	Arrived	Temp on arrival	Time on table	Back in fridge

Trip details

Destination: _____

Travel time: _____

Who refrigerates the dishes on arrival: _____

Contents labels written (dish, date): _____