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Enzymatic Action In Food Spoilage

Every living organism uses enzymes of many sorts in its bodily functions as part of its normal life cycle. Enzymes are used in creating life. After death, enzymes play a role in the decomposition of once living tissue. The enzymes in a tomato help it to ripen and enzymes produced by the tomato and whatever fungal and bacterial spoilers are on it cause it to decay.

Fortunately, slowing down or stopping the action of a food's enzymes is much easier to do than slowing or stopping some of the bacterial spoilers mentioned above. Enzymes are most active in a temperature range between 85 to 120 F and begin to be destroyed when the temperature goes above 140 F. Cold also slows down the action of enzymes, which is why fresh tomatoes last longer in the refrigerator than they do on the kitchen table. Most enzymatic action also requires moisture to occur. In foods stored at 10% moisture or less, there is not enough moisture for most enzymes to be active.

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