

Food Date Guidelines

Proper food storage enables us to provide safe food to our clients and families, while also minimizing food waste by allowing products to survive on the shelf longer. By adhering to safe temperature storage guidelines, understanding the meaning of dates on products, storing the items in the correct location and recognizing when a food has gone bad, we can provide the best products possible to our families and clients.

Expiration Date

The product is still safe to consume after the date except for baby formula. The product has either deteriorated or is not effective past this date.

Used for: baby food, infant formula, medicines, vitamins, yeast, and baking powder

Use by/Best if used by

Manufacturer's date for how long the food will be at it's best quality. Past that date, the food is still safe to consume, but may slowly decrease quality and nutrients.

Used for: Shelf stable and dry foods (cans, cereal, pasta, cookies, crackers)

Sell By

The store must sell the product by the date listed. The product may be safe to eat after this date.

Used for: refrigerated foods like milk, yogurt, eggs, packaged salads and lunch meat

Use By or Freeze By

This food must be frozen by the listed date, so it is safe to consume later.

Used for: Meat and convenience foods

Helpful Tips:

- Discard cans with no labels, dented rims, swelling, large dents, leaks, or rust.
- Dispose of dry product that has been torn open, become wet, or has mold.
- Keep food at least 6 inches off the ground to prevent contamination.
- Use your eyes: Products that are no longer safe to eat may be discolored or have mold.
- Use your nose: Products that are no longer safe to eat will give off an odor.
- Properly storing your food will extend its shelf life. Store shelf stable product in a cool, dry place ranging from 50°F-70°F.
- Refrigerated product should be held at 0°F-41°F.
- Frozen product must be kept below 0°F.
- Infant formula should not be purchased or used after its Expiration Date.
- Spices should have a strong odor. If a spice no longer has an odor, it should be thrown out.

Follow this chart to see how long unopened products will last past their expiration date.

Shelf Stable Product	Shelf Life After Date
High Acid Cans (Tomato Sauce, Pickles, Baked Beans)	18 months
Low Acid Cans (Carrots, Corn, Beans)	5 years
Pasta	2 years
Rice	2 years (white), 1 year (brown)
Flour	1 year (cake or all purpose), 6 months (whole wheat)
Sugar	2 years (white), 18 months (brown)
Oil	6 months
Baking Mixes	1 year
Dried Beans	1 year
Canned Meat	3 years
Cereal	1 year (ready to eat), 6 months (cook before eating)
Nuts	4 months (shelled), 6 months (unshelled)
Peanut Butter	9 months
Bread	7 days

Cold Product	Shelf Life After Date	Frozen Storage
Sliced deli meat	3 days	1-2 months
Vacuum sealed deli meat	2 weeks	2 months
Poultry	1-2 days	9 months
Beef, Veal, Lamb, Pork	3-5 days	12 months
Ground Meat	1-2 days	3-4 months
Fish	1-2 days	3-6 months
Shellfish	1-2 days	3-6 months
Milk	1 week	1 month
Yogurt	1-2 weeks	2 months
Cheese (hard)	6 months	6 months
Cheese (soft)	1 week	Do not freeze
Butter	3 months	9 months
Eggs (in shell)	3-5 weeks	Do not freeze

For more information on food safety storage guidelines visit:
<https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/foodkeeper-app>