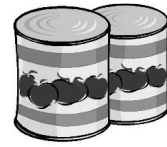


Expiration Dates



What do They Mean to You?

What is the reason for product dating?

*“It is a **QUALITY** issue- not **FOOD SAFETY**.” ~ Food Safety & Inspection Service, USDA*

Who decides what date to print on a food label?

THE FOOD MANUFACTURER! NOT THE GOVERNMENT OR ANY HIGHER AUTHORITY. The people who make our foods have labs which test and taste products to decide the freshness dates.

Why is there dating on some foods- not on others?

Dating is *not* required on most foods. In fact, federal agencies often discourage food processors and supermarkets from placing a date on the label. They know that dating can lead to food waste. Dating is needed on baby food, formula and NJ requires dating on fluid milk (which includes milk, cream, sour cream, cottage cheese and yogurt).

Sometimes food products at the FoodBank are past date. WHY?

A company will sell products as long as the stores will buy them. When there is less than a month to the product date, grocery stores will not pay full price. They want fresh tasting food for their money. That is when the food company makes a donation to the FoodBank to take care of any excess inventory.

The FoodBank says we can safely extend the date. Is this true?

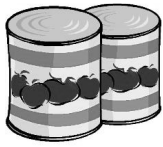
The FoodBank follows the food company’s rules for making the product life longer. The very same people who set the date have now added days or weeks to it! That’s because the original date was very conservative. The quality assurance folks are ready to safely extend the “use by” date, because they know that the food has been shipped and stored under good conditions.

Why does the FoodBank stop distributing food at the “extended date”?

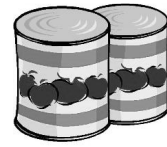
We do as the donor requires. The donor still cares about representing their brand well, even though it is donated. They care that the consumer finds their product fresh and tasty. Even though it is perfectly safe, they require that we stop distributing it at a date they select.

You mean the date never matters for safety?

No. Fresh products- like meat, fish, poultry, milk, and eggs can be unsafe. You should check the date and the product. The “sell by” date still allows a few days at home before consumption. Freezing will safely extend the date further.



Expiration Dates



What do They Mean to You?

What do all those dates mean?

“Sell by date”- tells the store how long to display the product for sale. The store rotates stock to be sure the oldest is sold first. The consumer can add days to this date before eating it.

“Best when used by date”- tells you when to eat or drink the product by for the *best flavor or quality*. This is not a purchase or safety date. Usually, you cannot even notice the difference when the date is passed.

“Use by date”- the last date for use of the product at peak quality.

“Closed or coded date”- packing numbers for the food company.

What can really happen to less than fresh foods?

If handled right, the food may just not taste fresh. Some products may be stale, moldy, smell or taste “off”. If food is covered in mold, discard it. Remember, when in doubt, throw it out!

Oil may become rancid. It will “off” and your nose will smell it. It won’t hurt you, but the flavor can affect what you add to it. This is also true for salad dressing, snacks and other high fat content foods.

What about freezing? What effect does it have on food?

You can freeze many foods. Freezing may affect texture or flavor but not safety. Food does not become unsafe in the freezer, but it doesn’t become safer either. Be sure it is not spoiled before you freeze it. Be sure you use it promptly when you thaw it. And do not thaw at room temperature.