



A Member of Feeding America

# **SORTING 101:**

## **NORTH TEXAS FOOD BANK**

### **GUIDE TO SAFE FOOD SORTING**

This guide is used as a reference for volunteers to determine what to keep and what to throw out when sorting through canned food items according to both product dates and quality in packaging.

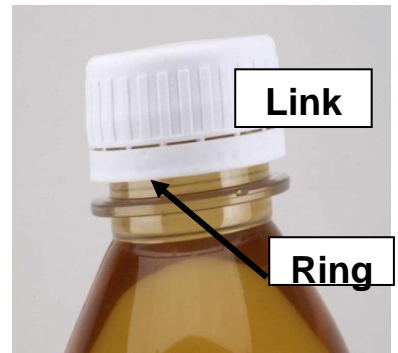
# Seals

*Ensure that tamper-proof seals are intact*



Discard the item if the seal is pierced, not adhered to the edge of the container, or if there is visual evidence of product contamination.

Look for plastic or metal caps on bottles attached by small links to a ring fastened around the bottle neck. If these connecting links are broken, discard the item.



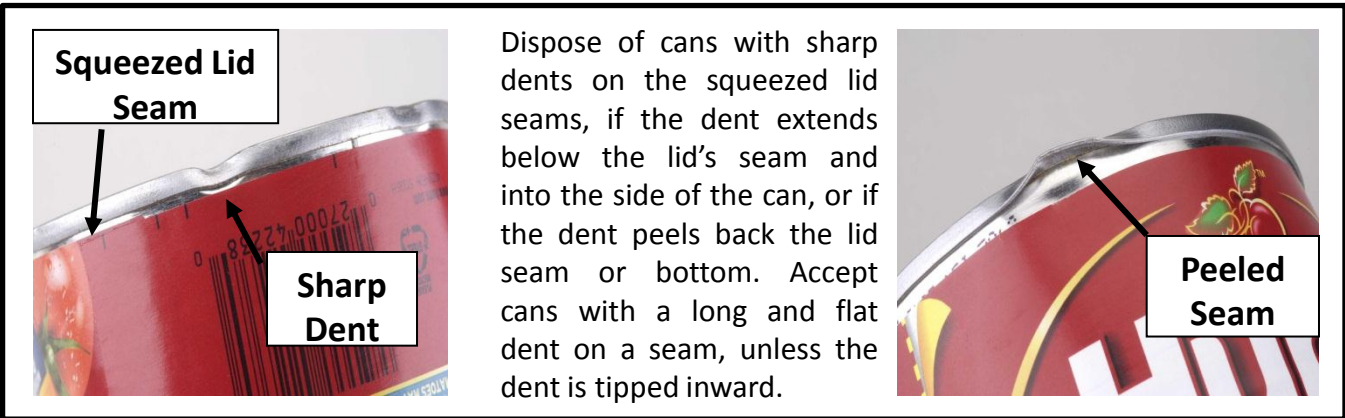
If shrink-wrap around bottles is completely broken, discard the item. If the seal is slightly damaged but shows no tampering was possible, retain the product.

A paper seal may be glued around the cap and neck of a bottle. If this paper is torn, discard the item.



# Cans

Look for these red-flag indicators of a “bad can”



**Squeezed Lid Seam**

**Sharp Dent**

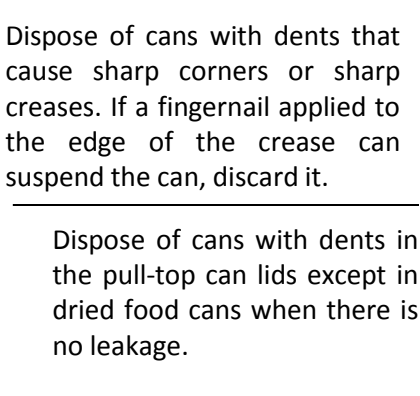
**Peeled Seam**

Dispose of cans with sharp dents on the squeezed lid seams, if the dent extends below the lid’s seam and into the side of the can, or if the dent peels back the lid seam or bottom. Accept cans with a long and flat dent on a seam, unless the dent is tipped inward.



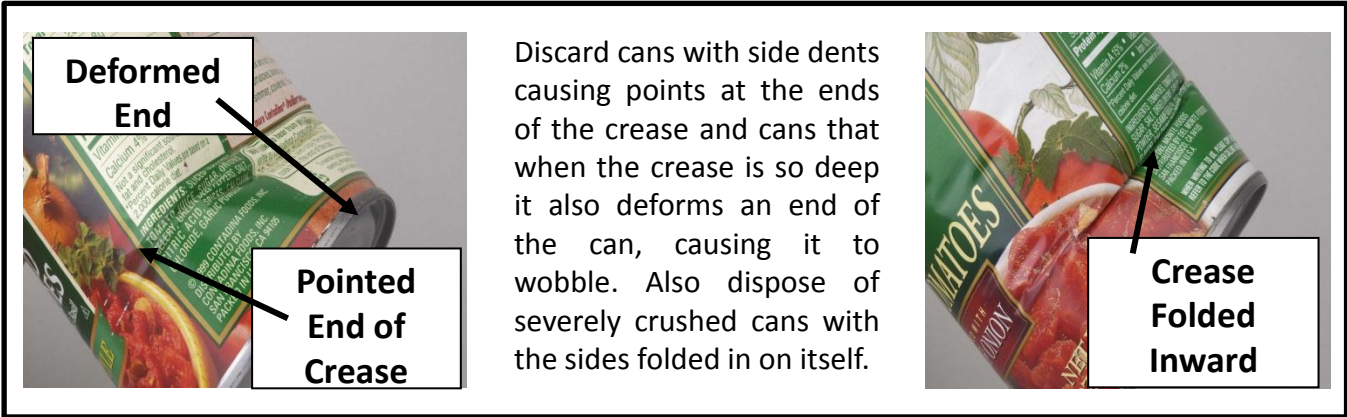
**Sharp Crease**

Dispose of cans with dents that cause sharp corners or sharp creases. If a fingernail applied to the edge of the crease can suspend the can, discard it.



**Dent**

Dispose of cans with dents in the pull-top can lids except in dried food cans when there is no leakage.



**Deformed End**

**Pointed End of Crease**

**Crease Folded Inward**

Discard cans with side dents causing points at the ends of the crease and cans that when the crease is so deep it also deforms an end of the can, causing it to wobble. Also dispose of severely crushed cans with the sides folded in on itself.



**Bulged Outward**

Dispose of swollen cans. You can detect a slight amount of swelling by pressing on the end. If the end can be pushed in, contamination is present. Discard even if the end springs back after it is released.

**Rust**

Rust that remains after wiping may indicate rust pitting that is deep enough to allow contamination. Discard the can.

# Glass & Plastic

## What to look for in a “good” jar

Pushed  
Inward



Check for a vacuum that makes the jar airtight. An inward dished lid (usually marked with a printed pop-up indicator) shows the jar has a vacuum and is airtight.

If a container is not vacuum-sealed, a screw-cap and seal protect the contents from tampering and physical contamination. Discard the item if there is visual evidence of contamination or if the seal is broken.

Screw  
Cap

Plastic  
Seal



## What to look for in a “bad” jar

Popped  
Outward



Discard jars with a raised center that may or may not spring back after being depressed. **Note:** An item may have both a pop-up seal indicator *and* a tamper-proof band. If the band is broken and the pop-up seal is intact, the item is acceptable.

Discard glass jars with dents on the lids. This indicates that glass chips may be in the food.

Dents



# Labels

## *What to look for in a label*

The U.S. Fair Packaging and Labeling Act prohibits the distribution of any food item (except fresh fruit and vegetables) without a label. Labels shall contain:

- Common name of the product, for example, apple sauce
- Name and address of manufacturer, packer or distributor
- Quantity of the contents, for example, 10 oz.
- Common name of each ingredient, for example, salt or sugar

Products with torn labels are acceptable when ***all*** the above information is legible and complete.

Many people are on restricted or specialized diets while others may be allergic to individual foods. The ingredients list helps them avoid products which may cause allergic reactions or are life threatening.

## Safe disposal of unsafe products

NTFB recommends that unsafe items should be disposed of in a lockable dumpster. If this is not available, open and pour out product or place in black trash bags to ensure the food is not available for consumption.

# OUT OF DATE PRODUCT DISTRIBUTION GUIDELINES

MEAT / PROTEIN			
	Best/use by date+ *	Exp. Date+ **	Notes
Frozen - Retail Pack	6 months	n/a	Styrofoam Tray - Store Wrapped
Frozen - Commercial Pack –Whole	1 year	1 year	Roasts, Turkeys, Hams, etc
Frozen - Commercial Pack - Sliced/ Ground	6 months	6 months	Deli Meats, Hamburgers, etc
Canned/Jar	2 years	2 years	Peanut Butter, Canned Tuna, Ham, etc.
FRUITS / VEGETABLES			
Frozen	18 months	1 year	
Canned	2 years	18 months	
Fresh	by inspection	by inspection	
DAIRY			
Fresh Milk	2 days	Zero Days	
Cheese - Packaged Sliced / Frozen	4 months	3 months	Commercial Pack - Retail Deli Donation
Cheese - Packaged Block	6 months	4 months	Refrigerated and by inspection
Fresh Eggs	8 weeks	4 weeks	
BEVERAGES			
Water	2 years	18 months	
Juice	18 months	1 year	
Other/Sport	4 months	2 months	
Soda Diet	6 months	3 months	
Soda Regular	1 year	9 months	
OTHER			
Dry Beans	18 months	1 year	
Cereal	18 months	1 year	
Bread	2 weeks	1 week	And by inspection
Pasta -dried	18 months	1 year	
Condiments	6 months	4 months	Mayonnaise, Ketchup, Dressings

+ If handled properly and kept at 40 °F or below the product will still be safe, wholesome and of good quality until the stated date *plus* the time listed. For example: Whole frozen turkeys with a best/use by date of Jan 1st, 2012 are safe to distribute to clients until Jan 1st, 2013.

\* **"Best/use by date"** is recommended for best flavor or quality and is determined by the manufacturer of the product.

\*\* **"Exp. Date"** is when the product has lost peak quality.