



Food Product Dating & Storage Recommendations

The Food and Drug Administration and the United States Department of Agriculture do not mandate that foods are date labeled, with the exception of infant formula and some baby foods which is required to carry an expiration date to ensure nutrient value has not deteriorated.

Product dates are not an indication of safety, but represent peak quality. If foods are consistently handled properly and kept at the appropriate temperatures they can often be used past their dates, exceptions including baby food, formula, vitamins, and medications. The Foodbank of Monmouth and Ocean Counties is often able to extend a product's shelf life according to recommendations by the manufacturer.

Foods can develop an off odor, flavor, or appearance due to spoilage or being improperly stored and subsequently should not be used. Use your sense of sight and smell. If you suspect a food has gone bad, you shouldn't taste it to find out.

When in doubt, throw it out.

Common Code Dates

Date	Examples	May be found on	What it means
"Pack Date"	"Packed on 12/15/2013" or Closed: "22:5214125"	Canned foods Crackers Cookies Spices	Date on which the food product was manufactured or placed in final package.
"Sell-By Date"	"Sell by 4/12/2014"	Refrigerated foods such as dairy, eggs, lunch meat, packaged salad mixes	Stores must sell these foods before the date listed. (Are still safe to consume after this date)
"Best By" or "Best if Used By"	"Best if used by 4/12/2014", "Best by 4/12/2014"	Crackers, cookies, cereal, soda/beverages	Manufacturer's estimate of date after which food may no longer be <u>at peak flavor or quality.</u>
"Use By"	"Use by 4/1/2014", "Use before 4/1/2014"	Crackers, cookies, cereals, dry shelf stable food	Manufacturer's estimate of last date recommended for use of product while at <u>peak quality.</u>
"Expiration Date"	"Expires 4/1/2014", "Do not use after 4/1/2014"	Baby food/formula Nutritional supplements, vitamins, medicines	Do not distribute after this date. Manufacturer cannot guarantee the nutritional value of these products after the date.

Dairy and Cooler Items	Refrigerated	Frozen
Butter	2 months	6-9 months
Buttermilk	10 days	Not recommended
Cheese, cottage	1 week	Not recommended
Cheese, soft	1 weeks	6 months
Cheese, hard	6 months	6-8 months
Cheese, processed	3-4 weeks	6 months
Cream Cheese	2 weeks	Not recommended
Coffee creamer	3 weeks	Follow instructions on package
Cream, half and half	3-4 days	4 months; use for cooking
Cream, heavy	10 days	3-4 months; use for cooking
Cream, light	1 week	3-4 months; use for cooking
Crust, pie or pizza	Use by date	2 months
Dips (w/sour cream)	2 weeks	Do not freeze
Dough, biscuit	Use by date	Do not freeze
Dough, bread or pizza	Use by date	Do not freeze
Dough, cookie	Use by date	Do not freeze
Eggs, in shell	3 weeks	Do not freeze
• Pasteurized	10 days	1 year
• Egg Substitute	10 days	1 year
Egg, pasteurized egg substitute	10 days	1 year
Juice, refrigerated	3 weeks	8-12 months
Margarine	6 months	12 months
Milk	1 week	Not recommended
Salad dressings, refrigerated	3 months	Do not freeze
Sour cream	2 weeks	Do not freeze
Whipped cream (aerosol)	3-4 weeks	Do not freeze
Yogurt	10-14 days	1-2 months

***Suggested dates assume product has not been opened and has been stored properly below 41°F.**

***Food stored constantly at 0° F or below will always be safe. Only quality suffers with lengthy freezer storage. Freezing preserves food for extended periods because it prevents the growth of microorganisms that cause both food spoilage and foodborne illness.**

Canned Foods	Shelf Life After Code Date
Beans	Up to 3 years
Fish: salmon, tuna, sardines, mackerel	Up to 3 years
High acid foods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruits (Applesauce, juices) • Pickles, sauerkraut • Baked beans w/mustard, vinegar • Tomatoes, tomato soups/sauces 	1 year
Low-acid foods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gravy, soups/broth not tomato based • Pasta, stews, cream sauces • Vegetables (not tomatoes) 	2-3 years
Meat: beef, chicken, pork, turkey	2-3 years
Pie Filling	3 years

Aseptically Packaged Products	Shelf Life After Code Date
UHT Milk	1 year
Broth: beef, chicken, vegetable	3 years
Soup	3 years
Fruits	3 years
Vegetables	3 years

Condiments, Sauces, Syrups	Shelf Life After Code Date
Barbecue sauce	1 year
Frosting, canned	10 months
Gravy, dry mix envelopes	2 years
Honey	2 years (remains safe after crystallization; immerse on hot water to liquefy)
Jams, jellies, preserves	18 months
Ketchup, cocktail, or chili sauce: jar, bottle, or packet	18 months
Mayonnaise: jar, bottle, packet (Refrigerated)	3-6 months
Mayonnaise (shelf-stable, unopened)	Up to 3 years: discard if discolored or has an off odor
Molasses	2 years
Mustard: jar, bottle, packet	2 years
Olives	18-24 months
Pickles	1 year, canned 2 years, jarred- discard if inside of lid rusty
Salad dressings, bottled	1 year
Salsa, bottled	12-18 months
Spaghetti sauce, canned or jarred	18 months
Syrup, chocolate	2 years
Syrup, pancake	2 years
Vinegar	2 years
Worcestershire sauce	2 years

Dry Goods	Shelf Life After Code Date
Baking mix, pancake	9 months
Baking mix, (brownie, cake, muffin,)	12-18 months
Beans, dried	1 year
Bouillon: beef or chicken	12-24 months
Bouillon: vegetables	12-24 months
Bread, commercially prepared	3-5 days at room temp; 3 months stored frozen
Cakes, commercially prepared	2-4 days at room temp; Several months stored frozen
Casserole mix	9-12 months
Cereal, cold	1 year
Cereal, hot	1 year
Cookies	4 months
Cornmeal	1 year at room temp; 2+ years frozen
Crackers	8 months (graham crackers- 2 months)
Flour, white	6 months (longer if refrigerated or frozen)
Flour, whole wheat	6 months (longer if refrigerated or frozen)
Fruit, dried	6 months
Macaroni and cheese, mix	9-12 months
Nuts, out of shell	6-12 months bagged; 12-24 months canned
Nuts, in shell	6-12 months
Oatmeal	12 months
Oil, olive, vegetable	6 months
Pasta, dry	2-3 years
Peanut Butter	18 months
Popcorn, kernels	2 years
Popcorn, commercially popped	2-3 months
Popcorn, microwave packets	1 years
Potato chips	2 months
Potatoes, instant mashed	1 year
Pretzels	6-8 months
Pudding, prepared/shelf stable	1 week
Rice, brown	1 year
Rice, white	2 years
Rice-based mixes	6 months
Spices	Whole spices: up to 4 years; Ground spices: up to 2 years; Spices lose flavor over time but remain safe indefinitely
Stuffing mix	9-12 months
Sugar, brown	18 months
Sugar, confectioners	18 months
Sugar, white	2+ years
Toaster pastries	6 months, fruit; 9 months no fruit
Tortillas	3 months shelf/refrigerator; 6 months frozen; do not use if moldy

Shelf Stable Beverages	Shelf Life After Code Date
Cocoa Mixes	36 months
Coffee creamer, liquid shelf stable	9-12 months
Coffee creamer, powdered	2 years
Coffee, ground	2 years
Coffee, instant	1-2 years
Coffee, whole bean	1 year, vacuum sealed
Instant Breakfast	6 months
Juice, bottle shelf-stable	9 months
Juice, box	4-6 months
Juice, canned	18 months
Milk, evaporated	1 year
Milk, non-fat dry	1 year
Milk, shelf stable UHT	6 months
Milk, sweetened condensed	1 year
Nutritional Supplements (Boost, Ensure)	Do not use after expiration
Rice milk, shelf stable	6 months
Carbonated beverages, (soda, seltzer)	3 months, bottles (all) 3 months, diet (cans) 9 months regular soda or seltzer (cans)
Soy milk, shelf stable	6 months
Tea, bagged	18 months
Tea, instant	3 years
Tea, loose leaf	2 years
Water	Indefinite, store in a cool, dark place away from chemicals
Water, flavored	Indefinite, store in a cool, dark place away from chemicals

The FDA has not established a shelf life for bottled water. The International Bottled Water Association advises consumers to store bottled water at room temperature (or cooler), out of direct sunlight, and away from solvents and chemicals. Bottled water can be used indefinitely if stored properly. (Source: "Packaging." International Bottled Water Association. Accessed 5/20/14. {<http://www.bottledwater.org/content/packaging-0>}).

Shelf Stable Foods	Shelf Life After Code
Baby Food	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cereal, dry mixes • Food in jars, cans, pouches • Formula 	Do not use after expiration date Do not use after expiration date Do not use after expiration date

Meats	From code date when Frozen
Raw fish	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salmon, mackerel • Cod, flounder, sole • Haddock, Pollock 	<p>3-6 months</p> <p>12 months</p> <p>12 months</p>
Fish-cooked	3-6 months
Shrimp, raw	9 months
Beef	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roast • Steak • Ground 	<p>1 year</p> <p>1 year</p> <p>9-12 months</p>
Pork	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roast • Chops • Ground 	<p>1 year</p> <p>1 year</p> <p>9-12 months</p>
Lamb	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roast • Chops • Ground 	<p>1 year</p> <p>1 year</p> <p>9-12 months</p>
Poultry	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole cuts • Ground 	<p>1 year</p> <p>9-12 months</p>
Bacon- unopened	6 months
Ham- unopened	1 year
Hot dogs- unopened	9 months

****Meats distributed by The Foodbank of Monmouth and Ocean Counties should be completely frozen on or before the expiration date, and stored at 0°F or lower for as long as possible before distribution. Do not leave meats out at room temperature unnecessarily!**

***Food stored constantly at 0° F or below will always be safe. Only quality suffers with lengthy freezer storage. Freezing preserves food for extended periods because it prevents the growth of microorganisms that cause both food spoilage and foodborne illness.**

Sources

1. "The Dating Game: How Confusing Labels Land Billions of Pounds of Foods in the Trash." September, 2013. Joint report of the NRDC and Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic.
2. "Food Product Dating." August 2013. USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service. Accessed 5/5/2014. {http://www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/Food_Product_Dating.pdf}
3. "Freezing and Food Safety." May 2010. USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service. Accessed 5/5/2014. {http://www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/Freezing_and_Food_Safety.pdf}
4. "Shelf Stable Food Safety." May 2011. USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service. Accessed 5/19/2014. {http://www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/Shelf-Stable_Food_Safety.pdf}
5. "Egg Products and Food Safety." March 2011. USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service. Accessed 5/19/14. {http://www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/Egg_Products_and_Food_Safety.pdf}.
6. "The Food Keeper: A Consumer Guide to Food Quality & Safe Handling." Food Marketing Institute. Accessed 5/19/2014. {http://www.arhungeralliance.org/Food_Keeper_Brochure.pdf}.
7. Feeding America: Food Donor Safety Resource Guide. Accessed 5/5/14.
8. Shelf Life of Food Bank Products: Greater Pittsburgh Community FoodBank.
9. Food Storage and Shelf Life Guidelines: FOODSHARE. www.foodshare.org. Accessed 5/7/2014.
10. Allen, Susan Davis and Rude, Becky. "DMA Practice Standards: Food Storage Guidelines." February 2011. Dietary managers Association. Accessed 5/7/2014. {<http://www.dmaonline.org/Resources/DMAResources/standard07.shtml>}.
11. Penner, Karen P. "Cupboard Approximate Storage Times." April 2014. Kansas State University Cooperative Extension Publication L-806. Accessed May 2014. {<http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/library/fntr2/l806.pdf>}.