

Understanding Food Dates: Quality and Expiration Guidelines

According to the USDA, foods not exhibiting signs of spoilage should be wholesome and may be sold, purchased, donated and consumed beyond the Sell By, Best By or Use By dates. Please refer to the USDA approved extended shelf date grace periods listed below. More information about food product dating can be found at go.osu.edu/foodproductdates



Baked Goods

includes bread

3 MONTHS (if frozen)



Baking Products

1 YEAR



Canned Items

5 YEARS



Cereals & Breakfast Items

1 YEAR



Condiments

1 YEAR



Milk

3 MONTHS (if frozen)



Drinks (not water)

includes powdered drinks

6 MONTHS



Water

2 YEARS



Peanut Butter

2 YEARS



Snacks

potato chips, popcorn.

6 MONTHS



Soup

broth, ramen

2 YEARS



Healthy Snacks

crackers, nuts, granola bars

1 YEAR



Dried Beans, Rice and Pasta

3 YEARS



Frozen Products

includes meat

1 YEAR



Processed Refrigerated Food

1 MONTH



Eggs

3-5 WEEKS



Baby Products

NO GRACE PERIOD



Refrigerated Dairy

yogurt, sour cream, cheese

**2 WEEKS - 3 MONTHS
IF FROZEN**

Expiration Date	The date past which a food is not safe to eat. The product must be removed from availability because it is no longer expected to be fresh or effective. (Examples: infant food, baby formula)
Sell By	This is a freshness date. Food is freshest by the date on the label, but still safe to eat after that date. (Examples: Milk can be safe up to 1 week and eggs can be safe up to 3-5 weeks after the sell by date)
Best By	This is a quality date. Food has the best quality if eaten by this date. You can eat acidic canned foods 12-18 months after this date. You can eat non-acidic canned foods 2-5 years after this date. (Examples: canned soup, vegetables)
Use By	This is the last date for use of the product at peak quality. This date has been determined by the manufacturer of the product.
Production Date	Tells you when the product was produced. It does not tell you anything about the quality, safety or shelf life of the product. Production dates are used to track products; they are not meant for the consumer.

