



Food Co-op at Bread Coffeehouse

In partnership with
**Student Case Management
 & Intervention Services**



What Is The Difference Between...

- A "**Best if Used By/Before**" indicates when a product will be of best flavor or quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.
- A "**Sell-By**" date tells the store how long to display the product for sale for inventory management. It is not a safety date.
- A "**Use-By**" date is the last date recommended for the use of the product while at peak quality. It is not a safety date except for when used on infant formula.

Are Dates for Safety or Quality? Manufacturers provide dating to help consumers and retailers decide when food is of best quality. **Except for infant formula, dates are not an indicator of the product's safety.**

Can Food be Donated After the Date Passes? Yes. The quality may deteriorate after the date passes but the products should still be safe and wholesome if not exhibiting signs of spoilage.

Frozen Foods: Food poisoning bacteria does not grow in the freezer, so **no matter how long a food is frozen, it is safe to eat.** Food stored constantly at 0 °F or below will always be safe.

Dry/Shelf Stable Foods: Most shelf-stable foods are safe indefinitely. Canned goods will last for years, as long as the can itself is in good condition (no rust, dents, or swelling). Packaged foods (cereal, pasta, cookies) will be safe past the 'best by' date. Dates on foods refer to quality, not safety.

Product Type (Unopened)	Date Extension
Tuna and other seafood in retort pouches	18 months
Rice and dried pasta	2 years
Fresh eggs (**The "sell-by" date will usually expire during that length of time, but the eggs are best quality, use within **3-5 weeks	For best quality, use within **3-5 weeks
USDA Dried Egg Mix (Store below 50 °F)	12 to 15 months
Low-acid canned goods Examples: canned meat and poultry, stews, soups (except tomato), spaghetti (noodle and pasta) products, potatoes, corn, carrots, spinach, beans, beets, peas, and pumpkin.	2 to 5 years
High-acid canned goods Examples: juices (tomato, orange, lemon, lime, and grapefruit); tomatoes; grapefruit, pineapple, apples and apple products, mixed fruit, peaches, pears, plums, all berries, pickles, sauerkraut, and foods treated with vinegar-based sauces or dressings like German potato salad and sauerbraten.	12 to 18 months
Frozen foods (**Kept at or below 0 °F)	**Forever
Condiments (Except Mayonnaise)	12 to 18 months
Mayonnaise	3 months
Cereal (Ready to eat)	months
Snack Foods Examples: Packaged cookies, crackers, granola bars, pretzels, chips	3 to 6 months
Popcorn	1 to 2 years

Food Safety Questions?

- Call the USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline at 1-888-674-6854, 10am - 4pm EST, Mon. - Fri.
- E-mail questions to www.MPHotline@usda.gov.
- "Ask Karen," a 24/7 virtual and live chat service, 10am – 6pm EST, Mon. - Fri. at www.AskKaren.gov.

Sources:

USDA - <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-factsheets/food-labeling/food-product-dating/food-product-dating>
 FoodSafety.gov - <https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/foodkeeperapp/index.html>