



FOOD RESCUE US[®]

Fairfield County, CT

Understanding Food Date Labels

More than 80% of Americans prematurely discard food that is still safe and edible simply because they misunderstand expiration labels.

Sell-By Date

A suggestion to the seller for how long the item should be displayed for sale before its quality deteriorates

Food is **SAFE** for consumption after the date but may begin to lose flavor or eye appeal



Best if Used By Date

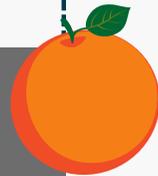


Indicates when the item will be of the highest quality or flavor. Item is still **SAFE** for consumption after the date, it just might not taste as good

Use-By Date

Indicates the last date recommended for the consumption of the item while at its peak quality.

However, it does **NOT** mean the food is unsafe to consume after the date



Freeze-By Date



Indicates when a product should be frozen to maintain peak quality. It is **NOT** a purchase or safety date.

Frozen food can still be eaten passed its expiration date

Expiration Date

No longer a recommendation like the other labels. If a **PERISHABLE** product's expiration date has passed, it **MUST** be thrown out. A **NON-PERISHABLE** product can be consumed after its expiration date; taste, quality, and nutrition may be compromised

Questions



How does date labeling impact food waste?

Confusion over the meaning of date labels is estimated to account for about 7% of all consumer waste. Educating on date labels can help distinguish true safety risk, in turn enabling those foods whose dates only indicate quality to be eaten, sold, or donated past their dates.

In an effort to reduce food waste, it is important to know that the dates applied to food, excluding the expiration date, are for quality and not for safety. Food products are safe to consume past the date on the label, and regardless of the date, consumers should personally evaluate the quality of the food product prior to its consumption.

Is food able to be donated after the date on its labels has passed?

Yes. The quality of perishable products may deteriorate after the date passes but the products should still be consumable if not exhibiting signs of spoilage. Food banks, other charitable organizations, and consumers should evaluate the quality of the product prior to its distribution and consumption to determine whether there are noticeable changes in wholesomeness.

How long are foods good after the package date?

According to the US Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service:

- Milk is good for about **a week** after the "sell by" date
- Eggs can keep for **three to five weeks** beyond the "sell by" date
- Fresh chicken, turkey, and ground meats should be cooked or frozen **within two days**
- Fresh beef, pork, and lamb should be cooked or frozen **within three to five days**

Cooking or freezing extends the amount of time a food will keep. Use your eyes and nose too, to determine if foods are fresh, regardless of the date on the package. Spoiled food will usually look different in texture and color, smell unpleasant, and taste bad before it becomes unsafe to eat.

How to extend date labels and avoid food waste:

- **Freeze it.** Frozen foods won't go bad because bacteria and other pathogens can't grow in frozen temperatures.
- **Repurpose fruit.** Fruit is one of the most common items to be tossed prematurely. However, fruits like bruised apples, overripe bananas, and citrus-like oranges and clementines that have dried up can be used in various recipes, like smoothies!
- **Properly store produce.** There are tricks for extending the shelf life of veggies, like wrapping broccoli in a damp paper towel, keeping celery in tinfoil instead of plastic, and putting asparagus in a glass with a half-inch of water.
- **Organize your fridge.** Studies have shown that out-of-sight foods are often forgotten, so keep the most perishable items up front on the highest shelves.
- **Compost.** Composting food scraps and other foods like bread is a great way to recycle food without contributing to more waste.