

Safe and Healthy: Food Product Dating

These are recommendations only. Always inspect products and discard if signs of spoilage appear. Dates on almost all food products are **quality dates**. The food can safely be consumed well past the “Best By” or “Use By” date on the package. Here are some tips to help you safely feed your family:

Foods stored in the cupboard

| category | storage and usage guidelines |
|---|--|
| Food in cans or jars (metal cans, glass jars, trays, pouches or paperboard containers) | Use for up to 2 years past the date marked on the package. Refrigerate after opening. |
| Bakery mixes: cake, muffin, cookie, and pancake | Use for up to 6 months past the date marked on the package. |
| Dry mixes (hamburger helper) or dry soup | Use for up to 2 years past the date marked on the package. |
| Dry potatoes, flavored rice or pasta | Use for up to 6 months past the date marked on the package. |
| Cereals, crackers, chips, rice, and pasta | Use for up to 2 years past the date marked on the package. |
| Juice (cans, plastic containers, juice boxes) | Use for up to 6 months past the date marked on the package. Refrigerate after opening. |
| Ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise, salad dressing | Use for up to 2 years past the date marked on the package. Refrigerate after opening. |

Foods stored in the refrigerator or freezer

| category | storage and usage guidelines | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| Eggs | As long as eggs are kept in the refrigerator, they can safely be cooked and eaten for up to 5 weeks after the date stamped on the carton. If you receive eggs that aren't in the original carton, plan to keep them refrigerated and use them within 2 weeks. | |
| Meat (hamburger, chicken) | Once you receive meat, cook or freeze within 3-5 days. Meat can be frozen for up to 1 year without harming quality. | |
| Meat salads or sandwiches | If you receive refrigerated deli meat, meat salads like tuna salad, or pre-made sandwiches, eat these within 3-5 days. Keep refrigerated. | |
| Lunch Meat | Deli sliced | Use within 2 days or freeze. Keep refrigerated. |
| | Packaged (bacon and hot dogs) | Eat up to 2 weeks past date. Once opened, use or freeze within 2 days. Cook bacon or hot dogs before eating. |
| Milk | Milk should be kept refrigerated. It may be good for up to 5 days past the date on the package. Throw away if the milk develops a sour or “fruity” taste. This may mean the milk has spoiled or “gone bad”. | |
| Yogurt, sour cream, buttermilk | Keep refrigerated and use within 3 weeks of the date stamped on the package. | |
| Cheese | Soft (cottage or cheese spread) | Use within 10 days after the date on the package. Keep refrigerated. |
| | Medium (muenster, brick, or mozzarella) | Use these within 2 months of the date on the package. Discard if mold develops. Keep refrigerated. |
| | Hard cheese (Cheddar, Swiss, or Parmesan) | Use within 4 months of the date on the package. Discard if mold develops. Keep refrigerated. |