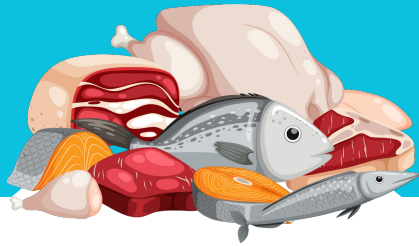


# Understanding Expiration Dates



If a food is past the expiration date is it safe to eat?  
Here is a quick guide to let you know if it is or isn't.



**Bread & Baked Goods**  
3 Months if Frozen



**Baking Soda**  
1 Year



**Peanut Butter**  
2 Years



**Drinks (Not Water)**  
6 Months



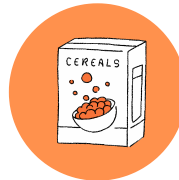
**Water (Including Sparkling & Flavored)**  
2 Years



**Non-Perishable Canned Items**  
5 Years



**Ramen, Soup, & Broth**  
2 Years



**Cereals & Breakfast Items**  
1 Year



**Healthy Snacks: Crackers, Nuts & Granola Bars**  
1 Year



**Other Snacks: Potato Chips, Popcorn, Etc.**  
6 Months



**Condiments**  
1 Year



**Dried Beans, Rice & Pasta**  
2 Years



**Refrigerated Dairy, including Milk**  
2 Weeks - 3 Months if Frozen



**Processed Refrigerated Food**  
1 Month



**Frozen Products**  
1 Year

There's no standardized system for food dating in the U.S. Approximately 40 states require dates on some perishable foods, like meat and dairy. Food products are safe to consume past the date on the label, according to the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS).<sup>1</sup>

In order to reduce food waste, FSIS recommends that regardless of the date, consumers should evaluate the quality of the food before deciding to eat it or throw it away. **The one exception: Federal law (FDA) requires a date on all infant formulas for safety and it should always be followed.** Expiration dates can be found on baby food, yeast, and baking powder.

1. USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service, Food Product Dating. Accessed Jan. 18, 2023.



# Understanding Expiration Dates



## Types of Dates:

### **Best If Used By/Before:**

This is a quality assurance date and serves as a "suggestion" for when the taste and quality of food are at their peak. It is **not** a purchase or safety date.

### **Use By:**

This is the suggested date by which you should eat the food. But just because it's several days past the use-by date doesn't mean that consuming it will make you sick, although you should evaluate the quality of the food after this time. It is **not** a safety date, **except** when used on infant formula.

### **Sell By:**

This is **not** a safety date but rather a date for retailers that helps them determine how long an item should remain on the shelf. According to the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT), "one-third of a product's shelf-life remains after the sell-by date for the consumer to use at home."

### **Freeze By:**

According to the USDA, this date indicates when a product should be frozen to maintain peak quality. It is **not** a purchase or safety date.

## How Long Are Foods Good After the Expiration Date?

"With the exception of infant formula, if the date [on your food] passes during home storage, a product should still be safe and wholesome if handled properly until spoilage is evident," according to FSIS. You can tell if a food is spoiled if it has an off odor, flavor, or texture.

## How Long Does Commercially Canned Food Last?

Yes, canned food can go bad. According to the USDA, high-acid canned goods, like tomatoes and citrus fruits, will keep for up to 1.5 years. Low-acid canned goods—that's pretty much everything else, including vegetables, meat, and fish—will last for up to 5 years.

## How Long Does Home Canned Food Last?

Per USDA, properly canned (per USDA guidelines) food stored in a cool, dry place will retain optimum eating quality for at least 1 year. Canned food stored in a warm place near hot pipes, a range, a furnace, or in indirect sunlight may lose some of its eating quality in a few weeks or months, depending on the temperature. Dampness may corrode cans or metal lids and cause leakage that results in food spoilage. For additional information, visit [https://nchfp.uga.edu/questions/FAQ\\_canning.html](https://nchfp.uga.edu/questions/FAQ_canning.html).

### Information Sources:

<https://www.foodsafety.gov/food-safety-charts/cold-food-storage-charts>

<https://www.fda.gov/media/101389/download>: Food Facts How to Cut Food Waste and Maintain Food Safety

<https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/food-product-dating>

<https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/shelf-stable-food>