What do the Dates on Food Packages Mean?

"Expiration Date" (Examples: "Expires 11/15/11" or "Do not use after 11/15/11")

- Look for it on: Baby food and formula, medicines, vitamins, yeast, baking powder.
- What it means: Do not distribute infant formula, baby food, vitamins, or medicines after the expiration date! Yeast and baking powder work less well after expiration but are safe to eat.

"Pack Date" (Examples: "Packed on 03/01/2012" or "22:5306412" or "KL064")

- Look for it on: Canned food, crackers, cookies, spices.
- What it means: This is the date the food was packaged. A code is often used that cannot be understood by the general public, often numbering days sequentially such that January 1 is day 001 and December 31 is day 365. Usually this food is of good quality and safe to eat for a long time past the date.

"Sell By" Date (Example: "Sell by January 1, 2012". Also called "Pull Date")

- Look for it on: Refrigerated foods such as milk, yogurt, cottage cheese, eggs, lunch meat, packaged salad mixes.
- What it means: The store must sell these foods before the code date listed and often donates these foods when they are close to date. If the food has been handled properly it is still safe to eat and the quality is good. Food bank staff monitors this food to ensure that the quality remains good.

"Use By" or Quality Date (Examples: "Best if used by 1/1/12" or "Use Before 1/1/12")

- Look for it on: Crackers, cookies, cold cereals, and other dry, shelf stable food.
- What it means: This date is the manufacturer's recommendation for how long the food will be at peak quality. After the quality date, the food is still safe to eat but slowly begins to lose nutrients and the quality begins to lessen.
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EXPIRATION DATE EXTENSIONS



THE FOOD BANK

Shelf stable/Dry Product	Exp. date Extension
Baby Food: Fruit, veggie, cereal & formula	no extension
Boxed Dinners:	
Hormel (Compleats)	1 year
Taco Bell with Shells	2 months
Taco Bell without Shells	1 year
Pasta Salads	6 months
Canned Goods	18 months
EXCEPT for canned meats	12 months
Condiments, Sauces, Syrups	
Apple Butter	3 months
BBQ sauce, Cocktail sauce	6 months
Dry mix packets, gravy, taco	1 year
Frosting, canned	6 months
Honey	1 year
Jelly/Jam, Fruit	1 year
Jelly/Jam, Sugar Free	9 months
Ketchup, Chili sauce	1 year
Mayonnaise	3 months
Molasses	2 years
Mustard	1 year
Olives, Pickles	6 months
Salad Dressing	6 months
Salsa	3 months
Syrup, corn, pancake	1 year
Syrup, chocolate	18 months
Vinegar	2 years
Dry Goods	
Baking Mixes: biscuit, pancake, cake, brownie, bread	6 months
Baking powder	no extension
Baking soda	2 years
Beans, dried	1 year
Cereal, bars, cream of wheat, rice	2 months
Cereal, boxed	6 months
Cereal, oatmeal	no extension

Shelf stable/Dry Product	Exp. date Extension
Dry Goods continued	
Cookies 4 months shelf,	6 months frozen
Cornmeal, cornstarch	6 months
Crackers	4 months
Croutons	6 months
Flour	6 months
Fried Onions, canned	3 months
Fruit Roll Up, By the Foot	3 months
Jello mix	2 months
Jerky, beef, turkey, etc.	12 months
Mac n Cheese	2 months
Nuts, jar or can	1 year
Oil, olive or vegetable	18 months
Oil, Walnut, Macadamia, nut oils	1 year
Pasta, dry with egg	2 years
Pasta, dry without egg, rice or soy	3 years
Peanut Butter	1 year
Pie Crust ready to bake	1 month
Popcorn, kernels	2 years
Popcorn, microwave packets	1 year
Potato Chips and other salty snacks	3 months
Potatoes, instant	6 months
Protein bars	3 months
Pudding mixes	6 months
Rice, white, wild or brown	1 year
Shortening/solid	6 months
Soups, broths, shelf stable cartons	6 months
Spices	1 year
Stuffing mix	1 year
Sugar, brown	4 months
Sugar, granulated or confectioners	2 years
Sugar, substitutes	1 year
Toaster pastries	3 months
Tortillas	2 months
Vanilla and other extracts	4 years
Yeast, dry	no extension

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Refrigerated Food	Refrigerated Extension	Frozen Extension	
Butter	7 days	6 months	
Buttermilk	7 days	freezes poorly	
Cottage cheese	15 days	freezes poorly	
Cream cheese, dips	30 day	freezes poorly	
Cheese Cake	freeze	60 days	
Cheese, cultured	30 days	6 months	
Cheese, Semi-Hard, Cheddar, Swiss, Mozzarella, shredded, bars, chunks, cubes, slices	30 days	6 months	
Cheese, Hard, Parmesan, Asiago, Romano, shredded, bars, chunks, cubes	60 days	6 months	
Cheese, melts, spreads	30 days	freezes poorly	
Cheese, Soft, Brie, Bel Paese	7 days	freezes poorly	
Cheese, String	30 days	6 months	
Cheese, Velveeta block	60 days	freezes poorly	
Cream, Half & Half, whipped, ultra pasteur- ized, heavy whip cream	7 days		
Cream, Whipped topping tub	7 days	60 days	
Cream, Whipped aerosol	3 months		
Dough, pizza crust, can biscuits, rolls, bread	14 days	6 months	
Dough, ready to bake pie crust and cookie dough	30 days	6 months	
Eggs, in shell	30 days	freezes poorly	
Eggs, liquid, substitutes,	7 days	3 months	
Eggs, hard cooked	7 days	freezes poorly	
Entrees, hot or cold	freeze	4 months	
Guacamole	7 days	6 months	
Hummus	7 days	6 months	
Refrigerated foods continued in next column			

Refrigerated Food	Refrigerated Extension	Frozen Extension
Jello, ready to eat	30 days	
Juice, concentrate, bottles, cups	7 days	6 months
Lunchables with drinks	no extension	freezes poorly
Lunchables without drinks	no extension	4 months
Margarine sticks, spread	7 days	6 months
Margarine, squeezable	30 days	
Milk, all alternatives soy, rice, oat, nut etc.	10 days	
Pickles (refrigerated such as Claussen)	30 days	
Pizza, take & bake		3 months
Pudding	7 days	
Store-sliced lunch meats	no extension	4 months
Salads	3 days	freezes poorly
Simply Potatoes products	14 days	4 months
Sour Cream	15 days	
Tea, cold	3 days	6 months
Tortillas	30 days	
Yogurt	15 days	
		1
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Refrigerated MEATS

Refrigerated Meat should be frozen by the extension date

Examples:

Bacon (refrigerated and fully cooked), Hot dogs, Louis Rich Fresh Meats, Oscar Mayer Fresh Meats, Slice Pack, Specialty/Deli Meats

Fresh Meat such as Beef, lamb, pork, veal, steak, roast, ground meat, sausage, liver, tongue

Cooked, smoked or processed meats such as Ham, Ham slices

Poultry, fresh, cooked or processed such as chicken and turkey whole or parts, chicken nuggets or patties, cooked poultry dishes, fried chicken, cook in bag turkey, ground turkey or chicken

Refrigerated Meat that is NOT RECOMMENDED for distribution

Examples:

Fish such as cod, flounder, haddock, sole, bluefish, mackerel, salmon, cooked fish and smoked fish, shrimp, scallops, crayfish, squid

ALREADY FROZEN PRODUCTS	Exp. date Extension
Bagels. bread dough, brownies	6 months
Burritos, sandwiches	6 months
Cakes	6 months
Cheese Cake	60 days
Cinnamon Rolls	60 days
Croissants, Danish	45 days
Deli Entrees	60 days
Fruit	6 months
Frozen Dinners/Breakfast/Entrees	4 months
Guacamole	6 months
Ice Cream	3 months
Meat, UNCOOKED	6 months
Meat, PRECOOKED	4 months
Muffins	6 months
Pancakes/Waffles	6 months
Puff Pastry	6 months
Rolls	6 months
Vegetables	12 months

Who determines the date extensions?

There is no set of rules for food dates other than those listed in the Expiration Date example on the next page.

On the internet, the same type of product might have different extensions, depending on the manufacturer. For example: Mac and Cheese. Kraft is a Feeding America national donor that sets the date extension for their product. Kraft says two months for their Mac and Cheese, but other manufacturers might say longer. Rather than have multiple manufacturers give us their own date extension, we use Kraft's date extension as a guideline.

So who determines the date extensions? Our donors do!

What it really comes down to is common sense. Look at the color, texture, and taste. Smell is the biggest indicator of food going bad. If it looks bad, smells bad, tastes bad, it is not good!

BEVERAGES/ Shelf Stable	Exp. date Extension
Cocoa and Cocoa mixes	2 years
Coffee, whole, ground, instant	6 months
Drink powders, County Time, Crystal Light, Kool Aid	6 months
Juice, bottles, boxes, Hi C, Minute Maid	6 months
Milk canned, evaporated, condensed	18 months
Milk, instant, dry	6 months
Milk, shelf stable, almond, soy, rice, oat, etc	6 months
Sports drinks, Gatorade, Propel, Powerade	9 months
Supplement drinks, Boost, Ensure	no extension
Supplement drinks, Muscle Milk	6 months
Soda, regular, diet, bottles, cans	9 months
Tea, bags	18 months
Tea, bottled	6 months
Water, bottle	2 years