

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.