



UNDERSTANDING EXPIRATION DATES

In 1968, treasure hunters discovered a Civil War-era steamboat at the bottom of the Missouri River. Among the items recovered were several intact cans of food. Years later, scientists opened the cans to find perfectly edible peaches, oysters, and tomatoes. They had stayed unspoiled for over a century. So why do modern canned foods claim to expire in a matter of months?

Here's the Truth

Food expiration dates have nothing to do with safety, and are only loosely related to quality.

They're the manufacturer's best estimate of when the product is at its freshest or "peak quality." Many foods will still be good to eat days, weeks, or months after those dates, depending on the food. **Except for infant formula**, dates are not an indicator of the product's safety and are not required by Federal law.



UNDERSTANDING LABELS

"Best Before" dates refer to quality rather than food safety.

It's the date before which the brand stands by its product (unless it's been opened or left out in warm temperatures). Foods with a "best before" date should be safe to eat after the date has passed, but they may no longer be at their very best quality. This is also true for: "best by," "best if used by," "use by," "enjoy by," & other similar expressions.

You can ignore "Sell By" dates as they are meant for grocery store staff.

Manufacturers build in quality so that if the food is sold by that date, you can still get it home and have top-quality shelf life for some time.

Safety after the date passes.

Spoiled foods will develop an off odor, flavor or texture due to naturally occurring spoilage bacteria. If a food has developed such spoilage characteristics, it should not be eaten.

The Nose Knows!

Use your eyes and your nose. For the most part, you can trust your senses to know when food has gone bad. Milk, yogurt, juice, sauces—they can all be subject to the sniff or taste test. Even meat that looks a little faded or gray is okay to eat. The products to be careful with are those they tell pregnant women to avoid—like deli meats and unpasteurized dairy products—and anything with mold.

Freeze your Food

One good way to extend the life of food beyond its date is to freeze it. It's like pushing the pause button on your food. Almost anything can be frozen—meat, milk, cheese, eggs, bread, unused pasta sauce.

How long will unopened food last?

Turn over to find out



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How long will unopened food last?

Food Product	Past Printed Date
Hummus	3-10 days
Whole Milk	5-7 days
Fresh Salsa	5-7 days
Sliced Bread	5-7 days
Non-Fat Milk	7-10 days
Cottage Cheese	7-10 days
Sour Cream	1-2 weeks
Reduced Fat Cream Cheese	2-3 weeks
Neufchatel Cheese	2-3 weeks
Cream Cheese	3-4 weeks
Eggs	3-4 weeks
Butter	1 month
Sliced Semi-Hard Cheese	1 month
Shredded Cheese	1-2 months
Semi-Hard Cheese (swiss, cheddar)	1-2 months
Hard Cheese (parmesan, romano, asiago)	2-4 months
Box of Cereal	6-8 months
Dry Pasta Noodle	1-2 years

Sources:

www.eatbydate.com

<https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/food-labeling/food-product-dating/food-product-dating>

<https://www.savethefood.com/tips/deciphering-dates-on-products>



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