



# Is This Food Safe To Eat?

**95%** of our food comes directly from manufacturers, distributors, wholesalers, grocery retailers, and farm co-ops.

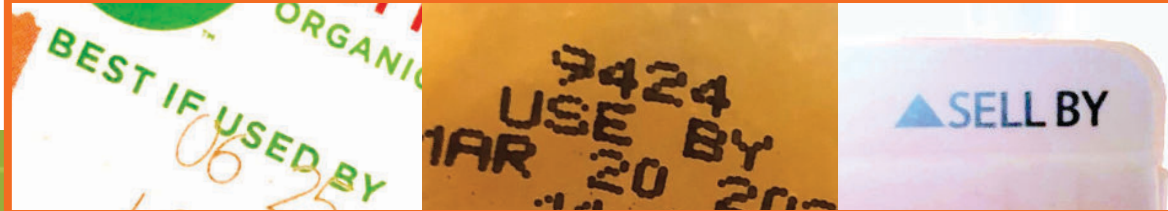
Through these partnerships, we are able to provide a variety of **fresh** produce, fresh or **frozen** meat, dairy and other perishables, as well as many **shelf-stable** pantry items, prepared meals, beverages, and paper products.

**The signs of spoilage are different for different types of produce.** These signs include wilted leaves and softness in crunchy fruits & vegetables. Products that are wilted or soft are still safe to eat.

Leaking juices, bad smells, and discoloration are signs that produce is no longer fresh. Mold or fungus can also be found on old produce. **Do not** eat anything with mold, fungus or off-odors and throw them out right away so they don't contaminate other produce.

[www.ACFB.org](http://www.ACFB.org)

## What's the difference?



### BEST BY

This indicates when a product will be of best flavor or quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.

### USE BY

This date is the last date recommended for the use of the product while at peak quality. It is not a safety date except for when used on infant formula.

### SELL BY

This date tells the store how long to display the product for sale for inventory management. It is not a safety date.

### Are Dates for Safety or Quality?

Manufacturers provide dating to help consumers and retailers decide when food is of best quality. **Except for infant formula**, dates are not an indicator of the product's safety.

### Can food be donated after the date passes?

Yes. The quality may decline after the date passes, but the food should still be safe as long as it does not show signs of spoilage.

### What about frozen foods?

Freezing food is a great way to keep food safe for longer periods of time, if kept at 0°F. Foods that are left in the freezer too long will start to lose their freshness, but are still safe to eat. Freezer burn can start to occur after 3 months, but does not make the foods unsafe to eat. To avoid freezer burn and enjoy foods at their best, it is recommended to eat within 1 year.

### Dry/Shelf Stable Foods:

Dates on foods refer to quality, not safety. Canned goods will last for years, as long as the can itself is in good condition (no rust, swelling or large dents). Packaged foods (cereal, pasta, crackers) can become stale past the 'best by' date, but will still be safe to eat.

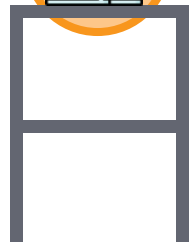
#### Sources:

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

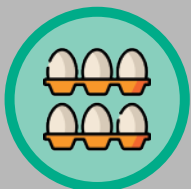
FoodSafety.gov - <https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/foodkeeperapp/index.html>

## Temperature Guide

**Shelf-Stable**  
Store at 50-70°F



**Frozen**  
Store at or below 0°F



**Refrigerated**  
Store at or below 40°F

## Food Safety Questions?

Call the USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline at 1-888-674-6854 from 10AM - 4PM EST Mon. - Fri.

E-mail questions to: [MPHotline@usda.gov](mailto:MPHotline@usda.gov)

“Ask USDA,” a phone and live chat service. Available via phone and live chat 8AM - 8PM EST Mon. - Fri. at (833)-ONE-USDA and [Ask.USDA.gov](http://Ask.USDA.gov).

## When In Doubt, Throw It Out!

Cans that are swollen, bulging, or have significant dents, especially in the seam

Rust that cannot be wiped off

Discoloration, mold, texture changes, or foul odors

Holes, torn packages, broken seals, signs of leaking or pests

Produce with severe decay or skin not intact

Homemade containers, missing, or unreadable labels

## How long past a Best By/Use By/Sell By date can a product be eaten?



**Baked Goods | 3 Days**  
Includes Bread



**Baking | 1 Year**



**Canned Fruits | 1-2 Years**  
Includes Tomatoes



**Canned Vegetables, Meats, & Soup | 2-3 Years**



**Cereals & Breakfast Items | 1 Year**



**Condiments | 1 Year**  
Excludes Mayonnaise



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



**[Shelf-Stable] Milk | 1 Year**  
Includes Condensed, Evaporated, & Powdered



**Peanut Butter | 18 Months**



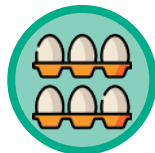
**Snacks | 6 Months**  
Includes Crackers, Chips, Popcorn, & Granola Bars



**Cheese | 6 Months**



**Dairy Foods | 2 Weeks**  
Includes Yogurt & Sour Cream



**Eggs | 1 Month**



**[Fresh] Milk | 1 Week**  
Includes Dairy, Soy, & Almond



**Plant-Based Proteins | 10 Days**  
Includes Tofu & Soy Patties



**Frozen Fruit | 1 Year**



Scan this QR code or visit, [bit.ly/ACFBfoodsafety](https://bit.ly/ACFBfoodsafety) for more nutritional resources.



**Frozen Vegetables | 1 Year**



**Frozen Meat | 1 Year**  
Includes Prepared Meals



**Baby Products | No Grace Period**  
Baby Food & Formula