






# "IS THIS FOOD STILL GOOD?"

## Helpful information for agencies and staff when deciding how long foods can safely be stored and distributed

- Most foods are good past the date printed on the package ("use by", "sell by", "pack" date, etc.). Exceptions include baby food, infant formula, medications, and recalled items - do NOT distribute these products after the date printed on the package.
- You can make foods last longer by storing them at the proper temperature, protecting them from pests and chemical exposure, and discarding spoiled items. Also be sure to follow the FIFO (first-in, first-out) or FEFO (first-expired, first-out) system to keep a close eye on your inventory.
- *When in doubt, throw it out!* Below are some signs of unsafe foods:
  - Cans that are swollen, bulging, or have significant dents, especially in the seam
  - Rust that cannot be wiped off
  - Holes, torn packages, broken seals, signs of leaking or pests
  - Discoloration, mold, texture changes, foul odors
  - Homemade containers, missing or unreadable labels
  - Produce with severe decay or skin not intact



Type of Food	General Storage Guidelines**
 <p><b>Shelf-stable</b> (cans, bottles, jars, boxed foods, etc.)</p>	Store at 50-70°F, many foods are good for several months or more past the container date
 <p><b>Refrigerated</b> (dairy, eggs, bakery, produce, etc.)</p>	Store at or below 40°F, freeze most meats and breads on or before the "use by" date or within 2-5 days of the "sell by" date for longer storage
 <p><b>Frozen</b> (meat, fish, entrees, etc.)</p>	Store at or below 0°F, fresh foods that are properly packaged and frozen (see guidelines above) are safe <b>indefinitely</b> but may have flavor and/or quality changes over time

\*\*Unless otherwise noted by Gleaners in reference to Feeding America Donor Requirements or USDA Guidelines

**See backside for specific guidelines on a variety of common food products**



# Common foods and how long to distribute them past the container date (if unopened)\*\*



Shelf-Stable Foods	Safe for up to:
Beans/lentils, dried	1 year
Biscuit or pancake mix	9 months
Brownie or cake mix	12-18 months
Canned foods, high-acid (e.g. tomatoes, fruit, pickles)	12-18 months
Canned foods, low-acid (e.g. meat, soup, veggies)	2- 5 years
Cereal and oatmeal	6-12 months
Cookies, crispy	4-6 months
Cookies, soft	2-3 months
Crackers, pretzels	4-9 months
Dried fruit	6 months
Gravy (jars, cans, packets)	2-5 years
Flour, white	6-12 months
Flour, whole wheat	3-6 months
Honey	2 years
Icing/frosting	10-12 months
Jams, jellies, preserves	6-18 months
Jerky	1 year
Juice	12-18 months
Ketchup, BBQ sauce	1 year
Macaroni & cheese, dry mix	2 years
Mayonnaise	3-6 months
Milk, powdered	3-5 years
Non-dairy milk (almond, soy, shelf stable)	3-4 weeks
Nuts, unshelled, bagged/bulk	2-4 weeks
Nuts, jarred/canned/bottled	1 year
Oils, olive or vegetable	6-12 months
Onions, fresh	1 month
Pasta, dry	2 years
Peanut butter	1-2 years
Popcorn, microwave	6-12 months
Popcorn, popped in bags	2-3 months
Potatoes, fresh	1-2 months
Potatoes, instant	10-15 months
Pudding mix	1 year
Rice, brown	1 year
Rice, white or wild	2 years
Salad dressing	10-12 months
Sauce, spaghetti and salsa	12-18 months
Spices, dried	2-3 years
Sweet potatoes	2-3 weeks
Syrup, pancake	1-2 years
Tea bags	2-3 years
Vinegar	2 years

Refrigerated Foods	Safe for up to:
Apples, fresh	4-6 weeks
Breads	2-3 weeks
Butter	1-2 months
Cakes, muffins, pastries	5-10 days
Carrots, fresh	2-3 weeks
Cheese, hard or string	5-6 months
Cheese, soft or cream	1-2 weeks
Cheese, Parmesan	1 year
Cheese, shredded	1 month
Coffee creamer, liquid	3 weeks
Cottage cheese	2 weeks
Deli/luncheon meat	2 weeks
Eggs, in shell	3-5 weeks
Milk, fresh	1 week
Non-dairy milk (almond, soy)	1 week
Pre-cut fruits or vegetables	2-5 days
Prepared pasta/potato salad	3-5 days
Tortillas	3 months
Whipped topping	3 months
Winter squash	1-3 months
Yogurt	1-2 weeks

Frozen Foods	Best quality for up to:
Bacon, hot dogs, sausage	1-2 months
Cakes, muffins, pastries	3-6 months
Cheese, shredded	3-4 months
Chicken tenders, nuggets	6-9 months
Cookie dough	2 months
Deli/luncheon meat	1-2 months
Egg substitute	1 year
Entrees, meals, pizza	3 months
Fish, lean, raw	6-10 months
Fish, fatty, raw	2-3 months
Fruits	8-12 months
Ice cream	2-4 months
Juice concentrate	1-2 years
Meat, ground	3-4 months
Meat, whole cuts	4-12 months
Pancakes, waffles	2 months
Vegetables	8-12 months
Whipped topping tub	14 months



For more product dating information, visit [www.foodsafety.gov](http://www.foodsafety.gov) or [stilltasty.com](http://stilltasty.com), or download the **FoodKeeper** app

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