



**GREATER
CHICAGO
- FOOD -
DEPOSITORY**

External Food Extension Guide

February 2023

Food Product Dating

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 and are not required by Federal law.

Examples of commonly used phrases:

- A "**Best if Used By/Before**" date indicates when a product will be of best flavor or quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.
- A "**Sell-By**" date tells the store how long to display the product for sale for inventory management. It is not a safety date.
- A "**Use-By**" 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 as described below.
- A "**Freeze-By**" date indicates when a product should be frozen to maintain peak quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.

These foods can be safely distributed past the date given "shelf-life extension", if handled and stored properly.

Extension Recommendations

Cheese

- Hard Cheese (Parmesan, Asiago, Romano) refrigerated 2-4 months / frozen 6-8 months
- Semi-Hard Cheese (Cheddar, Swiss) refrigerated 1-2 months / frozen 6-8 months
- Sliced Semi-Hard Cheese refrigerated 1 month / frozen 6-8 months

Frozen Protein

- Beef (fresh, ground, corned, steak) frozen: 6-8 months
- Pork (fresh, ground, shoulder, loin, sausage) frozen: 6-8 months
- Poultry (fresh, cooked) frozen: 1 year
- Bologna / Salami frozen: 2-3 months

Canned Vegetables

- Canned vegetables (& legumes): 1-2 years
- Canned High Acid vegetables: 18-24 months
- Canned corn & soups: 1-2 years

* Organic products may have shorter shelf-life due to the use of only natural preservatives

Extension Recommendations

Dairy

Dairy & Dairy Alternatives (soy, almond, rice & coconut milk):

- Refrigerated: 7-10 days / dry 1 month
- Lactose-free 7 skim refrigerated: 7-10 days
- Whole milk refrigerated: 5-7 days

Yogurt

- Frozen Yogurt: 2-3 months
- Drinkable refrigerated: 7-10 days / frozen 1-2 months
- Greek & reduced fat refrigerated: 1-2 weeks / frozen 1-2 months
- Yogurt with fruit refrigerated: 7-10 days / frozen 1-2 months

Eggs

- Refrigerated
 - Fresh eggs: 3-4 weeks
 - Egg Substitutes: 3-4 days
 - Egg yolks: 1-2 days

*Organic products may have shorter shelf-life due to the use of only natural preservatives.

Extension Recommendations

Bread

- Store frozen (tends to mold quickly refrigerated)
- Bakery bread frozen: 6 months
- Bagels frozen: 6 months

Grains

- Store in cool/dry place (extended periods watch for insects)
 - Dry: Pasta & Noodles 1-2 years
 - Dry: White rice 4-5 years
 - Dry: Brown & Wild rice 6-8 months

Cereal

- Store in cool/dry place (extended periods watch for insects)
 - Dry: 6-8 months

Terms



Organic Foods

Organic foods are farmed or processed through practices that only use natural substances. This means avoiding all artificial chemicals, hormones, antibiotics, MSG, and GMOs. Organic products may have shorter shelf-life due to the use of only natural preservatives.

Extended Shelf-life

Period beyond food product dating that foods can be safely distributed past the date given, if handled and stored properly.