

FOOD STORAGE GUIDELINES

Explanation of Food Labeling and Product Dating

Shelf Stable Foods

Bakery Products

Fresh Produce

Frozen Foods

Refrigerated Foods

Simple Food Storage Guidelines

USDA - FOOD LABELING AND PRODUCT DATING

"Sell by Feb 14" is a type of information you might find on a meat or poultry product. Are dates required on food products? Does it mean the product will be unsafe to use after that date? Here is some background information which answers these and other questions about product dating.

What is Dating?

"Open Dating" (use of a calendar date as opposed to a code) on a food product is a date stamped on a product's package to help the store determine how long to display the product for sale. It can also help the purchaser to know the time limit to purchase or use the product at its best quality. It is not a safety date. After the date passes, while not of best quality, the product should still be safe if handled properly and kept at 40 °F or below for the recommended storage times listed on the chart (see below). If product has a "use-by" date, follow that date. If product has a "sell-by" date or no date, cook or freeze the product by the times on the chart.

Is Dating Required by Federal Law?

Except for infant formula and some baby food (see below), product dating is not generally required by Federal regulations. However, if a calendar date is used, it must express both the month and day of the month (and the year, in the case of shelf-stable and frozen products). If a calendar date is shown, immediately adjacent to the date must be a phrase explaining the meaning of that date such as "sell-by" or "use before."

There is no uniform or universally accepted system used for food dating in the United States. Although dating of some foods is required by more than 20 states, there are areas of the country where much of the food supply has some type of open date and other areas where almost no food is dated.

What Types of Food Are Dated?

Open dating is found primarily on perishable foods such as meat, poultry, eggs and dairy products. "Closed" or "coded" dating might appear on shelf-stable products such as cans and boxes of food.

Types of Dates

- A **"Sell-By"** date tells the store how long to display the product for sale. You should buy the product before the date expires.
- A **"Best if Used By (or Before)"** date is recommended for best flavor or quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.
- A **"Use-By"** date is the last date recommended for the use of the product while at peak quality. The date has been determined by the manufacturer of the product.
- **"Closed or coded dates"** are packing numbers for use by the manufacturer.

Safety After Date Expires

Except for "use-by" dates, product dates don't always refer to home storage and use after purchase. "Use-by" dates usually refer to best quality and are not safety dates. But even if the date expires during home storage, a product should be safe, wholesome and of good quality — if handled properly and kept at 40° F or below. See the accompanying refrigerator charts for storage times of dated products. If product has a "use-by" date, follow that date. If product has a "sell-by" date or no date, cook or freeze the product by the times on the chart.

Foods can develop an off odor, flavor or appearance due to spoilage bacteria. If a food has developed such characteristics, you should not use it for quality reasons.

If foods are mishandled, however, foodborne bacteria can grow and cause foodborne illness -- before or after the date on the package. For example, if hot dogs are taken to a picnic and left out several hours, they wouldn't be safe if used thereafter, even if the date hasn't expired.

Other examples of potential mishandling are products that have been: defrosted at room temperature more than two hours; cross contaminated; or handled by people who don't use proper sanitary practices. Make sure to follow the handling and preparation instructions on the label to ensure top quality and safety.

Dating Formula & Baby Food

Federal regulations require a "use-by" date on the product label of infant formula and the varieties of baby food under FDA inspection. If consumed by that date, the formula or food must contain not less than the quantity of each nutrient as described on the label. Formula must maintain an acceptable quality to pass through an ordinary bottle nipple. If stored too long, formula can separate and clog the nipple.

Dating of baby food is for quality as well as for nutrient retention. Just as you might not want to eat stale potato chips, you wouldn't want to feed your baby meat or other foods that have an off flavor or texture.

The "use-by" date is selected by the manufacturer, packer or distributor of the product on the basis of product analysis throughout its shelf life; tests; or other information. It is also based on the conditions of handling, storage, preparation and use printed on the label. Do not buy or use baby formula or baby food after its "use-by" date.

What Do Can Codes Mean?

Cans must exhibit a packing code to enable tracking of the product in interstate commerce. This enables manufacturers to rotate their stock as well as to locate their products in the event of a recall.

These codes, which appear as a series of letters and/or numbers, might refer to the date or time of manufacture. They aren't meant for the consumer to interpret as "use-by" dates. There is no book which tells how to translate the codes into dates.

Cans may also display "open" or calendar dates. Usually these are "best if used by" dates for peak quality.

In general, high-acid canned foods such as tomatoes, grapefruit and pineapple can be stored on the shelf 12 to 18 months; low-acid canned foods such as meat, poultry, fish and most vegetables will keep 2 to 5 years — if the can remains in good condition and has been stored in a cool, clean, dry place.

Dates on Egg Cartons

Use of either a "Sell-By" or "Expiration" (EXP) date is not federally required, but may be State required, as defined by the egg laws in the State where the eggs are marketed. Some State egg laws do not allow the use of a "sell-by" date.

Many eggs reach stores only a few days after the hen lays them. Egg cartons with the USDA grade shield on them must display the "pack date" (the day that the eggs were washed, graded, and placed in the carton). The number is a three-digit code that represents the consecutive day of the year (the day that the eggs were washed, graded, and placed in the carton). The number is a three-digit code that represents the consecutive day of the year (the "Julian Date") starting with January 1 as 001 and ending with December 31 as 365. When a "sell-by" date appears on a carton bearing the USDA grade shield, the code date may not exceed 45 days from the date of pack.

Always purchase eggs before the "Sell-By" or "EXP" date on the carton. After the eggs reach home, refrigerate the eggs in their original carton and place them in the coldest part of the refrigerator, not in the door. For best quality, use eggs within 3 to 5 weeks of the date you purchase them. The "sell-by" date will usually expire during that length of time, but the eggs are perfectly safe to use.

UPC or Bar Codes

Universal Product Codes appear on packages as black lines of varying widths above a series of numbers. They are not required by regulation but manufacturers print them on most product labels because scanners at supermarkets can "read" them quickly to record the price at checkout.

Bar codes are used by stores and manufacturers for inventory purposes and marketing information. When read by a computer, they can reveal such specific information as the manufacturer's name, product name, size of product and price. The numbers are not used to identify recalled products.

Storage Times

Since product dates aren't a guide for safe use of a product, how long can the consumer store the food and still use it at top quality? Follow these tips:

- Purchase the product before the date expires.
- If perishable, take the food home immediately after purchase and refrigerate it promptly. Freeze it if you can't use it within times recommended on chart.
- Once a perishable product is frozen, it doesn't matter if the date expires because foods kept frozen continuously are safe indefinitely.
- Follow handling recommendations on product

SHELF STABLE FOODS

Before Opening, Shelf Stable Foods should be safe unless the can or packaging has been damaged. After opening, store products in tightly closed containers. The storage of many shelf-stable items at room temperature is a quality issue - unless the product is contaminated (bugs in flour, for example). Some foods must be refrigerated after opening, such as tuna or chili.

Product Type	Unopened on Shelf	Opened, refrigerated	On Opened on Shelf
<i>Baby Foods, Jars or Cans</i>			
Fruits & Vegetables	2 Months After Date	2-3 Days	
Meats & Eggs	2 Months After Date	1 Day	
Cereal, Dry Mixes	Use-by Date		2 Months
Formula	Use-by Date	1-2 Days	
<i>Baking Ingredients</i>			
Baking Powder	6 Months		3 Months
Baking Soda	18 Months		6 Months
Biscuit or Pancake Mix	15 Months		Pkg. Use-By Date
Cake, Brownie, & Bread Mixes	12-18 Months		Pkg. Use-By Date
Chocolate, Unsweetened, Solid	18-24 Months		1 Year
Cornmeal, Regular degerminated	6-12 Months	12 Months	
Cornmeal, Stoneground or Blue	1 Month	2-3 Months	
Cornstarch	18 Months		18 Months
Extracts, Vanilla, Lemon, Etc.	3 Years		1 Year
Flour, White	6-12 Months		6-8 Months
Flour, Whole Wheat	1 Month	6-8 Months	
Frosting, Canned	10 Months	1 Week	
Frosting Mixes	12 Months		3 Months
Shortening, Solid	8 Months		3 Months
Yeast, Dry, Packets and Jars	Use-by Date	Refrigerate open Jars	
<i>Breakfast Foods</i>			
Cereal, Ready to Eat	6-12 Months		3 Months
Cereal, Cook Before Eating	12 Months		6-12 Months
Toaster Pastries, Fruit filled	6 Months		Keep Foil Sealed
Toaster Pastries, Non-Fruit filling	9 Months		
Cocoa and Cocoa Mixes	Indefinitely		1 Year
<i>Canned Foods</i>			
Canned Goods, Low Acid*	2-5 Years	3-4 Days	
* Such as meat, poultry, fish, gravy, stew, soups, beans, carrots, corn, pasta, peas, potatoes, spinach			
Canned Goods, High Acid*	12-18 Months	5-7 Days	
* Such as; juices, fruit, pickles, sauerkraut, tomato soup, and foods in vinegar-based sauce			
<i>Coffee</i>			
Whole Beans, Non-Vacuum Bag	1-3 Weeks	3-4 Months Frozen	
Ground, In cans	2 Years	2 Weeks	
Instant, Jars and Tins	12 Months		2-3 Months
<i>Condiments</i>			
BBQ Sauce, Bottled	12 Months	4 Months	1 Month
Bacon Bits, Imitation	4 Months		4 Months
Product Type	Unopened on Shelf	Opened, refrigerated	On Opened on Shelf

Catsup, Tomato, Cocktail, or Chili Sauce	12 Months	6 Months	1 Month
Chocolate Syrup	2 Years	6 Months	
Chutney	12 Months	1-2 Months	
Gravy, Jars & Cans	2-5 Years	1-2 Days	
Gravy, Dry Mixes	2 Years		
Honey	12 Months		12 Months
Horseradish, in Jar	12 Months	3-4 Months	
Jams, Jellies, Preserves	12 Months	6 Months	
Mustard	12 Months	1 Year	
Olives, Black and Green	12-18 Months	2 Weeks	
Pickles	12 Months	1-2 Months	
Salad Dressings, Commercial	10-12 Months	3 Months	
Salsa, Picante and Taco Sauce	12 Months	1 Month	
Syrup, Pancake, Maple & Other	12 Months		12 Months
Maple Syrup, Pure	12 Months	12 Months	
Marshmallows, Marsh. Crème	2-4 Months		1 Month
Milk, Canned & Evaporated	12 Months	4-5 Days	
Molasses	12 Months		6 Months
Vinegar	2 Years		12 Months
Worcestershire Sauce	1 Year		1 Year
<i>Dried Fruits, Vegetables, Legumes</i>			
Beans, Dried	12 Months		12 Months
Fruits, Dried	6 Months	6 Months	
Garlic, Chopped Commercial Jars	18 Months	Use-By Date	
Herbs, Dried	1-2 Years		1 Year
Lentils, Dried	12 Months		12 Months
Mushrooms, Dried	6 Months		3 Months
Peas, Dried Split	12 Months		12 Months
Potatoes, Instant	6-12 Months		6-12 Months
Tomatoes, Sun Dried in Oil	12 Months	6-12 Months	
Tomatoes, Sun Dried in Celophane	9 Months		3-6 Months
<i>Drinks</i>			
Diet Powder Mixes	6 Months		3 Months
Diet Sodas, Bottled or Canned	3 Months After Date	2-3 Days	
Regular Sodas, Bottles	3 Months After Date	2-3 Days	
Regular Sodas, Cans	9 Months After Date		
Juices, Boxed	4-6 Months	8-12 Days	
Tea, Bags	18 Months		12 Months
Tea, Loose	2 Years		6-12 Months
Tea, Instant	3 Years		6-12 Months
Water, Bottled	1-2 Years		3 Months
<i>Nuts</i>			
Nuts, Jarred or Canned	12 Months	4-6 Months	
Product Type	Unopened on Shelf	Opened, refrigerated	Onopened on Shelf
Peanut Butter, Commercial	6-9 Months		2-3 Months

Oils

Olive or Vegetable Oil	6 Months		4-6 Months
Walnut, Macadamia, other nut oils	6 Months	4 Months	
Vegetable Oil Sprays	2 Years		1 Year

Pasta

Pasta, Dry Without Eggs	2 Years		1 Year
Egg Noodles, Dry	2 Years		1-2 Months

Popcorn

Dry Kernals, In Jar	2 Years		1 Year
Commercially popped in Bags	2-3 Months		1-2 Weeks
Microwave Packets	12 Months		1-2 Days popped

Rice

White, Wild or Brown	2 Years		1 Year
Flavored or Herb Mixes	6 Months		

Sauces

Non Dairy (Spaghetti, Taco)	2 Years		
Cream Mixes with Milk Solids	1 Year		
Soup Mixes	12 Months		

Snacks

Cookies, Packaged	2 Months	8-12 Months Frozen	4 Weeks
Crackers	8 Months	3-4 Months	1 Month
Potato Chips	2 Months		1-2 Weeks
Pudding Mixes	12 Months		3-4 Months
Pudding, Tapioca	12 Months		12 Months

Spices

Whole	2-4 Years		
Ground	2-3 Years		
Paprika, Red Pepper, Chili Powder	2 Years	Store in Refrig.	

Sugar

Brown	4 Months		
Granulated	2 Years		
Confectioners	18 Months		
Sugar Substitutes	2 Years		

BAKERY PRODUCTS

Bakery items containing custards, meat or vegetables, and frostings made of cream cheese, whipped cream or eggs must be kept refrigerated. Bread products not containing these ingredients are safe at room temperature, but eventually they will mold and become unsafe to eat. Refrigerate any cake with frosting make of cream cheese, butter cream, whipped cream, or eggs.

Product Type	Shelf	Refrigerator	Freezer
<i>Bread</i>			
Bread, Commercial	2-4 Days	7-14 Days	3 Months
Bread, Flat Tortillas, Pita	2-4 Days	4-7 Days	4 Months
Rolls, yeast or baked	Pkg. Date	7 Days	2 Months
<i>Cakes</i>			
Angel Food	1-2 Days	7 Days	2 Months
Cheesecake	No	7 Days	2-3 Months
Chiffon or Sponge	1-2 Days	7 Days	2 Months
Chocolate	1-2 Days	7 Days	4 Months
Fruitcake	1 Month	6 Months	12 Months
Made from Mix	3-4 Days	7 Days	4 Months
Pound Cake	3-4 Days	7 Days	6 Months
<i>Cookies</i>			
Cookies, Bakery or Homemade	2-3 Weeks	2 Months	8-12 Months
<i>Pastries</i>			
Croissants	1 Day	7 Days	2 Months
Danish	1-2 Days	7 Days	2 Months
Doughnuts, Glazed or Cake	1-2 Days	7 Days	1 Month
Doughnuts, Filled	No	3-4 Days	No
Muffins	No	3-4 Days	No
<i>Pies</i>			
Cream Pies	No	3-4 Days	2 Months
Chiffon Pie	No	1-2 Days	No
Fruit Pie	1-2 Days	7 Days	No
Mincemeat Pie	1-2 Days	7 Days	8 Months
Pecan	2 Hours	3-4 Days	8 Months
Pumpkin	2 Hours	3-4 Days	1-2 Months
Quiche	3-4 Days	7 Days	1-2 Months

FRESH PRODUCE

Raw fruits are safe at room temperature, but after ripening, will mold and rot quickly. For best quality, store ripe fruit in the refrigerator or prepare and freeze.

Product Type	Shelf	Refrigerator	Freezer
<i>Fruits</i>			
Apples	1-2 Days	3 Weeks	Cooked, 8 Months
Apricots	Until Ripe	2-3 Days	No
Avocados	Until Ripe	3-4 Days	No
Bananas	Until Ripe	2 Days	Whole Peeled, 1 Mo.
Berries, Cherries	No	1-2 Days	4 Months
Citrus Fruit	10 Days	1-2 Weeks	No
Coconuts	1 Week	2-3 Weeks	Shredded, 6 Months
Grapes	1 Day	1 Week	Whole, 1 Month
Kiwis	Until Ripe	3-4 Days	No
Melons	1-2 Days	3-4 Days	Balls, 1 Month
Papayas, Mango	3-5 Days	1 Week	No
Peaches, Nectarines	Until Ripe	3-4 Days	Sliced w/Lemon 2 Mo.
Pears, Plums	3-5 Days	3-4 Days	No
<i>Vegetables</i>			
Artichokes	1-2 Days	1-2 Weeks	No
Asparagus	No	3-4 Days	8 Months
Beans, Green or Waxed	No	3-4 Days	8 Months
Beets	1 Day	7-10 Days	6-8 Months
Cabbage	No	1-2 Weeks	10-12 Months
Carrots	No	2 Weeks	10-12 Months
Celery	No	1-2 Weeks	10-12 Months
Cucumbers	No	4-5 Days	No
Eggplant	1 Day	3-4 Days	6-8 Months
Garlic, Ginger Root	2 Days	1-2 Weeks	1 Month
Greens	No	1-2 Days	10-12 Months
Herbs, Fresh	No	7-10 Days	1-2 Months
Leeks	No	1-2 Weeks	10-12 Months
Lettuce, Iceberg	No	1-2 Weeks	No
Lettuce, Leaf	No	3-7 Days	No
Mushrooms	No	2-3 Days	10-12 Months
Okra	No	2-3 Days	10-12 Months
Onions, Dry	2-3 Weeks	2 Months	10-12 Months
Spring or Green Lettuce	No	1-2 Weeks	
Peppers, Bell or Chili	No	4-5 Days	6-8 Months
Potatoes	1-2 Months	1-2 Weeks	Cooked 10-12 Months
Spinach	No	1-2 Days	10-12 Months
Squash, Summer	No	4-5 Days	10-12 Months
Squash, Winter	1 Week	2 Weeks	
Turnips	No	2 Weeks	8-10 Months
Tomatoes	Until Ripe	2-3 Days	2 Months

FROZEN FOODS

When Shopping, place frozen foods in the cart last, immediately before checking out. Take the frozen foods directly home and place in freezer. For storage of meat and poultry purchased frozen, see refrigerated foods chart.

Product Type	Freezer	Refrigerator after Thawing
Bagels	2 Months	1-2 Weeks
Bread Dough, Commercial	Use-By Date	After Baking, 4-7
Burritos, Sandwiches	2 Months	3-4 Days
Egg Substitutes	12 Months	Date on Carton
Fish, Breaded	3 Months	Do not Defrost, Cook Frozen
Fish, Raw	6 Months	1-2 Days
Fruit	4-6 Months	4-5 Days
Guacamole	3-4 Months	3-4 Days
Ice Cream	2-4 Months	N/A
Juice Concentrates	6-12 Months	7-10 Days
Lobster Tails	3 Months	2 Days
Pancakes, Waffles	2 Months	3-4 Days
Sausage, Uncooked	1-2 Months	1-2 Days
Sausage, Precooked	1-2 Months	7 Days
Sherbert, Sorbet	2-4 Months	N/A
Shrimp, Shellfish	12 Months	1-2 Days
Topping, Whipped	6 Months	2 Weeks
TV Dinners, Entrees, Breakfast	3 Months	Do not Defrost, Cook Frozen
Vegetables	8 Months	3-4 Days

REFRIGERATED FOODS

Product Type	Refrigerated	Frozen
<p>Refrigerate foods to maintain quality as well as to keep them safe. Some bacteria grow and multiply - although very slow - at refrigerated temperatures. There is a limit to the time various foods will stay fresh and safe in a refrigerator. Food kept continuously frozen at 0° F will always be safe but the quality suffers with lengthy freezer storage.</p>		
Beverages		
Fruit	3 Weeks Unopened	8 - 12 Months
Juice & Punch, in Cartons	7-10 Days	8 - 12 Months
Condiments		
Refrigerated pesto, salsa	3 Days after opening	1-2 Months
Sour Cream-Based Dips	2 Weeks	Doesn't Freeze Well
Dairy Products		
Butter	1-3 Months	6-9 Months
Buttermilk	7-14 Days	3 Months
Cheese, Hard	6 Months, Unopen	6 Months
Cheese, Soft	1 Week	6 Months
Cheese, Cottage & Ricotta	1 Week	6 Months
Cream Cheese	2 Weeks	Doesn't Freeze Well
Cream, Whipping	1 Month	Do Not Freeze
Cream, Whipped & Sweetened	1 Day	2-3 Months
Cream, Real in Aerosol	3-4 Weeks	Do Not Freeze
Cream, Non-Dairy in Aerosol	3 Months	Do Not Freeze
Cream, Half & Half	3-4 Days	4 Months
Egg, liquid substitutes unopened	10 Days	Do Not Freeze
Egg, liquid substitutes opened	3 Days	Do Not Freeze
Eggnog, Commercial	3-5 Days	6 Months
Eggs, In Shell	3-5 Weeks	Do Not Freeze
Eggs, Raw Whites	2-4 Days	12 Months
Eggs, Raw Yolks	2-4 Days	Doesn't Freeze Well
Eggs, Hard Cooked	1 Week	Doesn't Freeze Well
Margarine	4-5 Months	12 Months
Milk	7 Days	3 Months
Pudding	Package Date	Do Not Freeze
Sour Cream	7-21 Days	Doesn't Freeze Well
Yogurt	7-14 Days	1-2 Months
Deli Foods		
Entrees, hot or cold	3-4 Days	2-3 Months
Store-Sliced Lunch Meats	3-5 Days	1-2 Months
Salads	3-5 Days	Do Not Freeze
Dough		
Dough, In Tube Cans	Use-by Date	Do Not Freeze
Ready-to-Bake Pie Crusts	Use-by Date	2 Months
Cookie Dough	Use-by Date	2 Months

Product Type	Refrigerated	Frozen
<i>Fish</i>		
Fish, Lean	1-2 Days	6 Months
Fish, Fatty	1-2 Days	2-3 Months
Caviar, non-pasteurized	6 Months, Unopen	Do Not Freeze
Caviar, pasteurized	1 Year Unopened	Do Not Freeze
Cooked Fish	3-4 Days	4-6 Months
Smoked Fish	14 Days	2 Months in Package
<i>Shellfish</i>		
Shrimp, Scallops, Crayfish, Squid	1-2 Days	3-6 Months
Shucked Clams, Mussels, Oysters	1-2 Days	3-6 Months
Live Shellfish	2-3 Days	2-3 Months
Cooked Shellfish	3-4 Days	3 Months
<i>Meat, Fresh</i>		
Beef, Lamb, Pork, or Veal Steaks	3-5 Days	4-12 Months
Ground Meat	1-2 Days	3-4 Months
Variety Meats (organs, etc.)	1-2 Days	3-4 Months
Cooked Meats (at home)	3-4 Days	2-3 Months
<i>Meat, Smoked or Processed</i>		
Bacon	7 Days	1 Month
Corned Beef, pickled in juice	5-7 Days	1 Month
Ham, Canned	6-9 Months	Not In Can
Ham, Fully Cooked & Whole	7 Days	1-2 Months
Ham, Fully Cooked, Slices & Halves	3-4 Days	1-2 Months
Ham, Pre-Cooked	7 Days	1-2 Months
Hot Dogs, Sealed in Package	2 Weeks	1-2 Months
Hot Dogs, Opened	1 Week	1-2 Months
Lunch Meats, Sealed in Package	2 Weeks	1-2 Months
Lunch Meats, Opened	3-5 Days	1-2 Months
Sausage, Raw Bulk	1-2 Days	1-2 Months
Sausage, Smoked Links	7 Days	1-2 Months
Sausage, Hard, Dry, Sliced	2-3 Weeks	1-2 Months
<i>Pasta</i>		
Pasta, Fresh	1-2 Days	2 Months
<i>Poultry, Fresh</i>		
Chicken or Turkey, Whole	1-2 Days	12 Months
Chicken or Turkey, Parts	1-2 Days	9 Months
Duckling or Goose, Whole	1-2 Days	6 Months
Giblets	1-2 Days	3-4 Months
<i>Poultry, Cooked or Processed</i>		
Chicken Nuggets, Patties	1-2 Days	1-2 Months
Cooked Poultry Dishes	3-4 Days	4-6 Months
Fried Chicken	3-4 Days	4 Months
Ground Turkey or Chicken	1-2 Days	3-4 Months
Lunch Meats, Sealed in Package	2 Weeks	1-2 Months

Product Type	Refrigerated	Frozen
Lunch Meats, Opened	3-5 Days	1-2 Months
Pieces covered with Broth/Gravy	1-2 Days	6 Months
Rotisserie Chicken	3-4 Days	

SIMPLE CODE DATE EXTENSION GUIDELINES

Product Type	Code Date Extension	Discard If:
<i>Dry Goods</i>		
Baking Products (flour, baking soda)	2 months	Mold, signs of pet infestation
Cereal	4 months	Stale, signs of pet infestation
Coffee	6 months	Stale
Condiments	2 months	Yeast or mold
Rice, Pasta, Beans	3 years	Pet infestation, mold
Crackers	4 months	Mold, stale
Bakery Products (bread, muffins)	3 days	Mold, stale
<i>Dairy</i>		
Cheese	1 month	Unnatural mold, odor, discolored
Milk	1 week	Curdle, odor
Yogurt	2 weeks	Mold, unnatural odor
Eggs	1 week	Cracked, odor
Tofu	4 days	Mold, bulging packaging, odor
<i>Desserts</i>		
Shelf Stable Desserts	2 months	
Refrigerated Desserts	1 month	
<i>Beverages</i>		
Ready-to-drink Beverages	2 months	Seals broken
Powdered Beverages	6 months	
Aseptic Bottled Juices	6 months	Broken seals, bulges, leaks
Refrigerated Juices	1 week	Broken seals, bulges, unnatural odors
<i>Meats</i>		
Refrigerated Meats	Use By Date	Mold, slimy, discolored
Frozen Meats	1 year	Large ice crystals or freezer burn
Lunch Meats, Hot Dogs, Ham & Sausage	7 days	Mold, slimy, discolored
<i>Fruits & Vegetables</i>		
Fresh	1-2 weeks	Mold or rotten
Frozen	1 year	Large ice crystals or freezer burn