

Frequently asked questions

1. Explain the printed numbers on food products and all codes and numbers as per USDA norms:

"Sell-By" This number is for the store, letting employers know how long a certain product can stay on the shelf. You should buy the food item before this date passes to ensure its freshness.

"Best Before" This date helps specify when a product is at its peak freshness. It does not indicate the safety of the item. Buy and use before this date for best quality.

"Use-By" These dates indicate when a product will start deteriorating in quality and flavor.

Closed or coded dates: These are packing codes that track the product when it is being shipped. These codes are typically a series of numbers and letters that indicates dates and times of the container was filled and places of manufacture.

2. What is Shelf life of food products

Shelf life is the recommended maximum time for food products or fresh harvested fruits can be stored, during which the defined quality of a specified proportion of the goods remains acceptable under expected or specified conditions of distribution, storage and display.

3. Name the different types of canned food with example.

High-acid canned foods for example, tomatoes, and fruits will keep their best quality for 12 to 18 months; low-acid canned foods for example meats, and vegetables for 2 to 5 years at 27 °C.

4. How sell by date and expiration date differs?

"Sell by date" is a less ambiguous term when compare to an "expiration date". Most food is still edible after the expiration date. A product that has passed its shelf life might still be safe, but quality is no longer guaranteed in case of sell by date.

5. Write a note on shelf life.

Shelf life depends on the degradation mechanism of the specific product. Most can be influenced by several factors such as exposure to light, heat, moisture, transmission of gases, mechanical stresses, and contamination by micro-organisms. Product quality is often mathematically modeled around a parameter concentration of a chemical compound, a microbiological index, or moisture content.

6. How to increase the self life?

Preservatives and antioxidants may be incorporated into some food and drug products to extend their shelf life. Some companies use induction sealing and vacuum/oxygen-barrier pouches to assist in the extension of the shelf life of their products where oxygen causes the loss.

7. Write a note with respect to Expiry dates and Food Wastage

Reducing food wastage is one way of making food chains more sustainable, and it can cut costs to companies and consumers. It has identified that better use of expiry dates as one way of combating food wastage. Various proposals have been put forward in this connection.

8. How is the regulation enforcement of expiry date in India

In India, the packaged food products do not have to print an expiry date on the labels except pharmaceutical products. The existing rules mandate that the manufacturers only need to print a "Best Before Use" on the label for selling in the retail market. By printing Best Before Use on the label, manufacturers of the food

products cannot be held responsible if the products sold after date become unusable.

9. What is the role of the mentioning expiry date for being better health?

1. Abolishing minimum durability dates for long-life products;
2. Providing better information to consumers on the difference between minimum durability and use-by dates;
3. Placing both 'sell by' and 'use by' dates on packaging.

10. What are the different and common things about expiration and best before dates

1. Expiration dates tell consumers the last day of a product is safe to consume. A food should never be consumed after the expiry date. Best before dates are found on foods that will only stay fresh for 90 days or less. Some foods may be consumed even if their best before date has passed, unlike an expiry date.

2. Best before dates guarantee freshness

An unopened, properly stored product's best before date tells a consumer how long that food will keep its flavour and nutritional value. The manufacturer's nutritional claims may no longer apply after a best before date or if the product isn't properly stored. Orange juice may not provide as much Vitamin C and milk less riboflavin past the best before date.

Other items may have **compromised taste, but still be safe to eat**. Ketchups and salsas may be more acidic, dry pasta may break when cooked, and cookies at the back of the pantry may just taste bad. It's generally the taste, not safety that suffers. However, food products must be properly stored according to package instructions to avoid turning mouldy or sour before their best before date.

3. The best before date no longer applies if a package is opened or if the food is frozen, according to Health Canada. Once a sealed product is exposed to air it can be cross-contaminated.

4. Even though some food remains edible after best before date but just less tasty and nutritionally dense. It doesn't mean all food is safe to eat when that date passes.

5. Fresh doesn't always mean better, Experts point out that fresh produce found in Canadian grocery stores during the winter may have less nutritional value than frozen vegetables. It takes several weeks for produce to be picked and transported from warmer climates. As soon as someone picks a vegetable, its nutrients start to decline.

11. Mention the general storage duration for food and beverages products.

Chocolates-1 year from production date

Brown sugar- indefinite shelf life, stored in a moisture proof container in a cool and dry place

Coffee- canned ground- Unopened: 2 years Opened: 1 month if refrigerated

Coffee Beans- 3 weeks in paper bag, longer in vacuum-seal bag, after this time, color or flavor may be affected, but product is still generally safe to consume

Ground nut: 1 week in sealed container

Coffee- instant- Unopened: Up to 2 years Opened: Up to 1 month

Beer- Unopened: 4 months.

Soda- regular Unopened: In cans or glass bottles, 9 months from “best by” date

Opened: Doesn't spoil, but taste is affected

Diet soda and soft drinks in plastic bottles-Unopened: 3 months from “best by” date. Opened: Doesn't spoil, but taste is affected.

Dried pasta- 12 months

Frozen dinners- Unopened: 12 to 18 months

Frozen vegetables-Unopened: 18 to 24 months Opened: 1 month

Honey- Indefinite shelf life

Juice, bottled (apple or cranberry)- Unopened: 8 months from production date

Opened: 7 to 10 days

Ketchup, Unopened: 1 year, after this time, color or flavor may be affected, but product is still generally safe to consume

Opened or used: 4 to 6 months (after this time, color or flavor may be affected, but product is still generally safe to consume

Maple syrup, real or imitation- 1 year

Maraschino cherries- Unopened: 3 to 4 years Opened: 2 weeks at room temperature; 6 months refrigerated

Marshmallows-It is a soft item of confectionery made from a mixture of sugar, albumen, and gelatin- Unopened: 40 weeks, Opened: 3 months

Mayonnaise; it is a thick creamy dressing consisting of egg yolks with oil and vinegar- Unopened: Indefinitely

Opened: 2 to 3 months from “purchase by” date, after this time, color or flavor may be affected, but product is still generally safe to consume

Mustard- 2 years (after this time, color or flavor may be affected, but product is still generally safe to consume)

Olives- Unopened: 3 years, Opened: 3 months

Olive oil- 2 years from manufacture date (after this time, color or flavor may be affected, but product is still generally safe to consume)

Peanuts Unopened: 1 to 2 years unless frozen or refrigerated, Opened: 1 to 2 weeks in airtight container

Peanut butter- natural- 9 months

Peanut butter- processed - Unopened: 2 years, Opened: 6 months;

Pickles Unopened: 18 months Opened: No conclusive data. Discard if slippery or excessively soft.

Protein bars or Power Bars: Unopened: 10 to 12 months

Rice- white- 2 years from date on box or date of purchase

Salad dressing, bottled Unopened: 12 months after “best by” date Opened: 9 months refrigerated

Steak sauce 33 months (after this time, color or flavor may be affected, but product is still generally safe to consume)

Tea bags (Lipton) Use within 2 years of opening the package

Tuna fish canned unopened: 1 year from purchase date Opened: 3 to 4 days, not stored in can

Soy sauce, bottled Unopened: 2 years Opened: 3 months (after this time, color or flavor may be affected, but product is still generally safe to consume)

Vinegar 42 months

Wine (red, white) Unopened: 3 years from vintage date; 20 to 100 years for fine wines

Opened: 1 week refrigerated and corked

12. How would be safety after date expires?

Except for "use-by" dates, product dates don't always pertain to home storage and use after purchase. "Use-by" dates usually refer to best quality and are not safety dates. Even if the date expires during home storage, a product should be safe, wholesome and of good quality if handled properly. See the accompanying refrigerator charts for storage times of dated products. 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, food borne bacteria can grow and, if pathogens are present, cause food borne 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 will not be safe if used thereafter, even if the date hasn't expired.

13. Write a note on following:

Sell-By: This number is for the store, letting employers know how long a certain product can stay on the shelf. You should buy the food item before this date passes to ensure its freshness.

Best Before: This date helps specify when a product is at its peak freshness. It does not indicate the safety of the item. Buy and use before this date for best quality.

Use-By: These dates indicate when a product will start deteriorating in quality and flavor.

Closed or coded dates: These are packing codes that track the product when it is being shipped. These codes are typically a series of numbers and letters that indicates dates and times of the container was filled and places of manufacture.

Expiry dates: expiration dates indicate when product will expire due to spoilage which means unfit for use.

Food Wastage: the wastage of food is due to spoilage crosses expiry date. Reducing food wastage is one way of making food chains more sustainable, and it can cut costs to companies and consumers.

Use-by dates: Except for "use-by" dates, product dates don't always pertain to home storage and use after purchase. "Use-by" dates usually refer to best quality and are not safety dates.

14. Write a note on Shelf life of food products

Shelf life is the recommended maximum time for food products or fresh harvested fruits can be stored, during which the defined quality of a specified proportion of the goods remains acceptable under expected or specified conditions of distribution, storage and display.