

Capital Area Food Bank

Guidelines for Perishable and Non-Perishable Food Items

Last updated: 02/07/2003

Item	Storage Temperature	Storage Length	*Discard
Eggs	40° F or Below	Eggs in shell – 3 weeks past expiration date Hard cooked – 1 week past expiration date Pasteurized or substitute – 10 days past expiration date	Off odor, color or taste
Milk * Borden	40° F 0° F	Consume 4 days past expiration date *Borden milk is up to expiration date 3 months past expiration date	Off odor or taste
Yogurt/Sour Cream	40° F (Do not Freeze)	14 days past expiration date	Mold, off odor or taste
Frozen Meat	0° F or below	Up to 1 year past expiration date	Off odor, color, open package or freezer burned
Cheese	40° F 0° F	14 days past expiration date 3 months past expiration date	Discard if package is open
Baked Goods	Keep in cool and dry place	Up to 10 days past expiration date	Any visible mold, discard whole piece
Non-Perishable Prepackaged Food (can items)	Store in well ventilated and climate controlled area	Up to 5 years past expiration date	Bulging or springiness on ends, leaking, severe dents, pitted rust or rust under the rim
Baby Food	Store in well ventilated and climate controlled area	Discard after expiration date	Popped safety seal, cracks, leaks
Adult Formula	Store in well ventilated and climate controlled area	Discard after expiration date	Popped safety seal, cracks, leaks
Cans/bottles/aseptic containers	Store in well ventilated and climate controlled area	Up to 3 years past expiration date	Bulging, springiness on end, leaking, damaged seals, severe dents or rust, popped safety seal
Cereal/Crackers	Store in well ventilated and climate controlled area	Up to 1 year past expiration date	Stale, insects
Dried beans/pasta	Store in well ventilated and climate controlled area	Up to 3 years past expiration date	Insects, mold or stale
Freezer products	0° F or below	Up to 1 year past expiration date	Off odor or taste
Prepared salads/foods & dips	40° F	Use by expiration date,	Past date
Refrigerated juices & teas	40° F	Up to 4 weeks past expiration date	Mold, fermentation, off odor or taste
Rice	Store in well ventilated and climate controlled area	Up to 3 years past expiration date	Insects, mold or stale
Mayonnaise	Store in well ventilated and climate controlled area	3 months past expiration date	Jar is leaking, open or seal has been broken. Food is discolored or has off odor
Dressings	Store in well ventilated and climate controlled area	10 months past expiration date	Jar is leaking, open or seal has been broken. Food is discolored or has off odor
Processed refrigerated foods (tofu, lunchables)	40° F	UP to 30 days past expiration date,	Seal is broken in all compartments, Food is discolored or has off color.
Produce	40° F Temperature may vary depending on type of produce	Refer to discard	Mold, decay, fungus, insects, discoloration, off odor or taste
Prepackaged Lettuce	40°F.	Up to 14 days past the expiration date, If past expiration date check for off odor before consuming	Mold, decay, fungus, insects, discoloration, off odor or taste
Candy	Store in well ventilated and climate controlled area	Refer to discard	Candy is wrapped and does not have an outer sealed package, decay, insects, discoloration, off odor or taste

Recommendations are only valid if the product has been stored and handled correctly and the protective seal has not been broken.

* Food Product past the expiration date, pull, or sell by date will lose some flavor, yet will still contain nutritional value. This does not include product listed above that is not recommended to be used after its expiration date, pull or sell by date.

Decoding the Freshness Dates

- **Baked Goods, Cereal, Snacks and some Canned Goods**

Phrases such as “**Best Before**,” “**Better if Used Before**,” or “**Best If Used By**” tell you how long the product will retain its best flavor or quality. They are found on products like baked goods, cereals, snacks, and some canned foods. The food is still safe to eat after this date, but it might have become stale or changed somewhat in taste or texture.

- **Yogurt, Eggs and other Foods that require refrigeration**

The “**Expiration**,” “**Use By**,” or “**Use Before**” date, which appears on yogurt, eggs, and other foods that require refrigeration, goes a bit further. A product past its expiration date should be used within the guidelines of storage stated in the Capital Area Food Bank Guidelines for Perishable and Non-Perishable Food Items. When “Expires” or “Use By” appears on items like yeast or refrigerated dough, it indicates how long the product will retain its rising power.

- **Highly Perishable Food with a particular shelf life, like Meat, Milk, and Bread**

The “**Sell By**” date, often referred to as the “**Pull**” date by manufacturers, is usually found on highly perishable foods with a particularly short shelf life, like meat, milk, and bread. It indicates the last day the product should appear on a supermarket shelf.

When refrigerated at 40°F or below most foods will remain safe to eat for about five days after the “Sell By” date. However, you should pay special attention to meats. Fresh beef and pork keep no more than 3 to 5 days in the refrigerator, while fresh poultry, seafood, and ground or chopped meat should be used within a day or 2 of purchase. Many highly perishable items may be frozen on or before the “sell by” date. Please refer to Capital Area Food Bank Guidelines for Perishable and Non-Perishable Food Items for storage length guidelines of frozen product.

Note: Although the store should pull a product after the “**Sell By**” date has passed, it remains legal to sell the food (as long as it’s still safe to eat). Shoppers are advised to select packages with the latest date available and to inform the manager if old foods are still being displayed on the shelf.

- **“Pack” “Closed” or “Coded dates are not intended for consumers**

Other types of dates, known as “**Pack**,” “**Closed**,” or “**Coded**” dates, represent the date on which a food was packaged or processed for sale. Take, for instance, “A70319R 23:16,” which you might find on a jar of **Mott’s Applesauce**. The “A” is the code for the particular plant at which the applesauce was produced. The “7” is for 1997; “0319” means that the applesauce was produced on March 19 of that year. “R” signifies that it’s Regular applesauce (as opposed to, say, Cinnamon), and “23:16” shows the time of packing –11:16 p.m. **Pack dates are not intended for consumers but rather are used by manufacturers and retailers, in tandem with lot numbers, to track inventory, rotate food on shelves, and locate items in case of a recall.**

How do you decipher a date that appears without any words or alone? Since dates are printed at the manufacturer’s discretion, their meanings may be different for each product line. You can not decipher all the manufacturers’ codes.

Frozen Food Handling Instructions:

Thawing can be done in four ways:

1. In a refrigerator at 40° F. Place food in a pan to catch drips.
2. Under COLD running water or immersed in cold water. Food should be wrapped tightly in plastic. DO NOT thaw outside for longer than two hours. As a variation: place in a pan of cold water in the refrigerator.
3. In a microwave oven, only in small quantities and if cooked immediately after thawing.
4. As part of the cooking process. Stir while cooking.

COOK OR EAT AS SOON AS IT IS THAWED. ALWAYS INSPECT FOOD BEFORE AND AFTER IT HAS BEEN THAWED. IF IT SMELLS BAD OR IS DISCOLORED, DISCARD IMMEDIATELY. IF IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT.

For further information or questions contact the USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline:

Number: 1-800-535-4555

Web site address: <http://www.usda.gov/fsis>

Labeling Requirements:

The Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act and the Fair Packaging and Labeling Act require specific information to be on products prior to distribution.

Labels of food products must contain:

- The common name of the product on the principal display panel.
- The name and place of business of the manufacturer, packer, or distributor.
- The net quantity of the contents on the principal display panel.
- The common or usual name of each ingredient, listed in descending order of prominence.

For further information or questions about the Capital Area Food Bank:

Perishable hotline: (512) 282-6616 ext.127

Web site address: <http://www.austinfoodbank.org>