

EXPIRATION DATES vs. EAT BY DATES



Sometimes dates on food are confusing!

The examples below show how long past the dates that food is still safe to eat.

WHAT IT MEANS

SELL BY _____

This is a freshness date. Food is freshest by the date on the label, but still safe to eat after that date.

ENJOY BY _____

Examples are milk (up to 1 week after the sell by date) and eggs (3-5 weeks after the sell by date).

BEST BY _____

This is a quality date. Food has the best quality if eaten by this date. You can eat acidic canned foods 12-18 months after this date. Examples are canned tomatoes or pineapples.

BEST IF USED BY _____

You can eat non-acidic canned foods up to 2-5 years after this date. Examples are canned soup or vegetables.

EXPIRATION _____

This is a true expiration date. After the expiration date, the food is not safe to eat and must be thrown away.

USE BY _____

Examples are baby food and infant formula.

FROZEN FOOD

Frozen foods remain safe indefinitely, though they eventually get freezer burn. Cook immediately after thawing. The cooked food may be refrozen.

NOTHING

If there is no expiration date, use the can within one year from when you got it.

_____ or _____

This is a manufacturing date. It is not an expiration date.

Treat this as a "Best By" date and follow the above guidelines.

**A series of numbers and letters,
like W15KA253XJ**

This is a packing code. It is used only by the manufacturer. It is not an expiration date. Use the above guidelines.

Never use a can if it is bulging, leaking, rusty, or if the rim is dented.