

FOOD SAFETY INFORMATION

SHELF LIFE REFERENCE GUIDE

Estimated Shelf Life

Product	Past Code Date	Discard If
Baby Food (Jars)	Use by date	Past code date, popped seal, cracks or leaks
Baby Juice	One year	Damaged or leaking
Bread/ Bakery Products	3 – 10 days	Visible mold
Cans/Bottles/Aseptic Containers	One to several years	Bulging, leaking, damaged seal, severe dents or popped
Cereal	6 months to 2 years	Stale or insects
Crackers	6 months to 2 years	Stale or insects
Dried Beans	Several years	Insects, mold, or stale
Freezer Products	3 months to several years	Off odor or taste
Infant Formula	Use by date	Past code date
Pasta	Several years	Insects, mold, or stale
Prepared Salads or Dip (Refrigerated)	Use by date	Past code date
Refrigerated Juices/Tea	1 to 4 weeks	Mold, off odor/taste, fermentation
Rice	Several years	Insects, mold, stale
Eggs	3-5 weeks	Slimy, pink egg white, off odor
Yogurt/sour cream/cottage cheese	1 to 3 weeks, if unopened	Off odor/taste, mold
Milk	5-7 days, if unopened	Off odor/taste

WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!
UNSAFE FOOD CAN CAUSE SERIOUS ILLNESS OR DEATH.

Proper Storage: The chart above is a quick reference for estimating the shelf life of Food Bank products after the stamped date. Products will last longer if properly stored. Keep frozen food at 0 degrees F, and refrigerated foods at 36-40 degrees F. Make sure these products are transported and put away within one hour after pick-up, especially during hot summer months. Dry products including cans and packaged goods will last longer if stored in a cool, dry place. These products do not usually grow bacteria unless packaged good become damaged or the seal of cans or bottles becomes damaged. Under ideal conditions many of these products will last several years.

SAFE FOOD STORAGE

STORAGE:

- For Dry Storage, 50-70 degrees is optimal. High temperatures can cause the quality to decline more quickly. If your storeroom heats up in the summer, see if ventilation can be increased.
- For Refrigerators, 32 – 40 degrees
 - "Danger Zone" = between 40 and 140 degrees
- For Freezers, 0 – 10 degrees
- Use metal shelves if possible.
- Keep food six inches away from walls, ceilings, and floors.
- Use the "First In, First Out" *and* "First Expired, First Out" food safety practices.
- Protect area from insects and rodents.
- Clean spills immediately.

SHELF LIFE:

- **Most dry products** packed in glass or cans last for years if there is no damage to the packaging or no discoloration (through the glass) of the product. Vitamin content and texture decline over time. * 1 year past best-by date.
- **Other packaged products** such as cereal and crackers are good as long as they do not have bugs, become too stale to taste good, or the lining isn't ripped. You'll know when you open the package if the food has lost quality. * 1 year past best-by date.
- **Refrigerated products** such as yogurt can be stored in the refrigerator one to two weeks or frozen for one to two months. Soft cheeses can be refrigerated one week but they don't freeze well. Hard cheeses can be stored in the refrigerator six months before opening the package and three to four weeks after opening, and can also be frozen six months. Processed cheese slices don't freeze well but can be kept in the refrigerator one to two months. Milk can be refrigerated seven days; buttermilk, about two weeks. Milk or buttermilk may be frozen for about three months. You'll know when you open the product if the food has lost quality.
- **Frozen products** that have been in the freezer for months may be dry, or may not taste as good, but they will be safe to eat. * 1 year past best-by date.
- Baby food must be disposed of if past the expiration date.
- Pickles lose their color if stored too long; discard if they look grayish or pale. * 1 year past best-by date.

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Exception: All USDA/TEFAP food must be used by the date on packaging.

Resources:

<https://ask.usda.gov/s/article/How-long-can-you-keep-dairy-products-like-yogurt-milk-and-cheese-in-the-refrigerator>

<https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/refrigeration>

<https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/shelf-stable-food>

SAFETY:

- Never accept home canned goods.
- Never taste from suspicious looking cans.
- Store cleaning products separately from foods.
- Never accept, purchase, or hand out:
 - cans that swell, bulge, or leak
 - cans with dents on seams or rims
 - cans with rust that does not brush away
 - cans with severe dents anywhere
 - boxes that have no linings and are ripped
 - bags that are ripped

ARE DENTED CANS SAFE?

If a can of food is dented, it might be unsafe to eat the food contents. BUT, not all dented food cans are bad. Some dented cans of food may be perfectly safe.

There are several ways to determine whether or not a dented can of food may be safe to eat, or, if it should be discarded:

Push on the Top and Bottom of the Can

If the top or bottom moves or makes a popping sound, the seal has probably been broken. Air may have made its way inside. Throw out cans that make that popping sound. If the can does not make a noise or move when pressing on the top and bottom, it's probably safe to eat (the seal is still good).

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Dents on Top, Bottom, or Seams

Toss out cans that are dented on the *top* or *bottom*, or *the seams*. This is where it's weakest – where the main seams of the can are located.



Dent on Sides of Can

If the can is dented along the side, it depends on the dent. Sharp/pointed dents and folded metal are not safe and must be tossed out.



Sharp Dent



Folded Dent

Bulging And Bloated Can – Not Safe!

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If it's bulging and bloated (unlike an ordinary dent), it is not safe. Cans will bulge and bloat when bacteria begins to produce gasses which push the can outward.



Is Rust Visible Anywhere on the Can?

Rust will weaken the integrity of the can and may allow air and bacteria to enter, particularly if the rust does not simply brush off.



Foodborne Botulism is a rare but serious illness caused by eating foods that are contaminated with the disease-causing toxin.

You cannot see, smell, or taste botulinum toxin – but taking even a small taste of food containing this toxin can be deadly.

PREPARED FOOD

Keep hot food at 135°F (57°C) or higher

Keep cold food at 41°F (5°C) or lower

Keep frozen food frozen

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