

These are recommendations only. Always inspect products and discard if signs of spoilage appear.

For Food Safety Sake: Keep or Toss? Distributing and Using Donated Products

Category	Product(s)	Storage and Usage Guidelines
Baby Food	Moist food	Do not use after date on container. Refrigerate after opening. Use within 3 days once opened.
	Dry infant cereal	Do not distribute or use after date on container. Store in a cool, dry location.
	Infant formula – wet or dry	Do not distribute or use after date on container. Store in a sealed container. Keep liquid formula refrigerated after opening.
Bakery Items	Breads, rolls, cakes, Danishes, cookies	Use for up to 1 week after date on package. Discard if mold appears.
Canned Foods (includes trays and pouches)	Canned fruits, tomato products, and pickled foods	Use for up to 2 years past the date marked on the product. Discard cans if deeply dented, or any tears or rips in flexible packages or foil tops.*
	Canned meat, poultry, fish, soup, vegetables, and pasta	Use for up to 2 years past the date marked on the product. Refrigerate after opening. Discard cans if deeply dented, or any tears or rips in flexible packaging or trays.*
Cereals, Chips and Crackers		Use for up to 2 years past date marked on package. Product may stale before then.
Condiments	Ketchup, mustard, mayo	Distribute up to 2 years past date. Discard discolored or separation has occurred. Refrigerate after opening.
Cream-filled Pastries & Cream Pies	Pastries or pies with whipped cream topping or custard filling	Keep refrigerated. Safe to distribute up to 5 days past date on package if kept refrigerated.
Dry Mixes	Soup, meal-in-a-box (i.e. meal helper)	Distribute up to 2 years past date marked.
	Potato, pudding, flavored rice or pasta, seasonings	Distribute 6 months past date on package. Store in a cool, dry location.
Jars	Glass	Use for up to 2 years past date on container. Refrigerate after opening. EXCEPTION for juice (see below).
	Plastic	Use for up to 2 years past date on package. Refrigerate after opening. EXCEPTION for juice (see below).
Juice	Jars, cans or juice boxes	Distribute up to 6 months past date on package. Refrigerate after opening.
Mixes (bakery)	Cake, muffin, cookie, pancake	Distribute up to 6 months after date on package. Store in a cool, dry place.
Flour	Wheat, rice, soy	Distribute up to 1 year past date on package. Store in a cool, dry place. Discard if signs of insect infestation appear.
Rice & Pasta	Unflavored	Distribute up to 2 years past date on package.
Whole Grains	Whole wheat flour, corn meal, oatmeal	Distribute whole wheat products up to 6 months past date; other whole-grains up to 2 years. Store in a cool, dry place.
Salad Dressing		Distribute up to 2 years past date on package. Refrigerate after opening. Once opened, use within 2 months.

***Deep dents** have sharp edges and are large enough to rest a finger in the dent. Discard cans with deep dents. Discard cans that are bulging or leaking. Discard cans with heavy rust (pitting).

“Sell by” – Quality date found on eggs, milk and lunch meat. Distribute by this date, with time still left for storage and use at home.

“Use by or Best by” – Quality date found on canned food and cereal. Except for baby food, product may be safely used and distributed well past this date.

“Expiration date” – Quality date on infant formula and vitamins. Do not distribute infant formula or vitamins past date.

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A Guide to Refrigerated or Frozen Products

Category	Product(s)	Storage & Usage Guidelines
Butter & Margarine		Refrigerate or freeze. If kept cold, may be edible for up to 3 months after product date.
Cheese	Soft (cottage, string, feta, cheese spread)	Distribute up to 1 week past date; use within 3 days. Keep refrigerated.
	Cream cheese (spread)	Distribute up to 2 weeks past date; use within 7 days. Refrigerate. Discard if moldy.
	Hard (Cheddar, parmesan)	Good almost indefinitely. Keep refrigerated. Discard if moldy.
	Medium (muenster, brick, mozzarella)	If kept cold, can be distributed for many months past the date. Keep refrigerated. Discard if moldy.
Eggs	Washed, from a licensed processor, dated	Distribute up to 3-5 weeks past date on carton; use within 2 weeks. Keep refrigerated.
Milk	Fluid milk	Keep refrigerated. Can be safely consumed up to 5 days past product date.
	Canned or boxed milk	Store unopened up to 1 year past date on package. Refrigerate once opened. Use within 7 days.
Soft Desserts	Puddings, cheese cake	Distribute up to 1 week past date; use within 3 days. Keep refrigerated.
Yogurt & Sour Cream	Yogurt, smoothies, sour cream	Distribute up to 14 days past the date on the container; use within 7 days. Keep refrigerated.
Casseroles		Keep refrigerated. Use/distribute within 3 days, or freeze. Reheat thoroughly.
Salads, prepared	Egg, tuna, chicken	Keep refrigerated. Use/distribute within 3-5 days.
Sandwiches		Keep refrigerated. Use/distribute within 3 days.
Soups & Stews		Keep refrigerated. Use/distribute within 3 days, or freeze. Reheat thoroughly.
Poultry (chicken, turkey)	Fresh (uncooked)	Cook or freeze within 2 days. Keep cold.
	Cooked	Use within 5 days. Keep cold.
Ground Meat	Beef, chicken, turkey, pork, lamb	Cook or freeze within 2 days. Once cooked, use within 5 days. Keep cold.
Meat (beef, pork, lamb)	Fresh (uncooked)	Cook or freeze within 3-5 days. Keep cold.
	Cooked	Use within 5 days. Keep cold.
Ham	'Cook Before Eating'	Cook or freeze within 7 days. Once cooked, use within 2 weeks.
	Canned (marked 'Keep Refrigerated')	Store for up to 9 months in the refrigerator. Once cooked, use within 2 weeks.
Lunch Meat	Deli sliced	Use within 2 days or freeze. Keep refrigerated.
	Pre-packaged (includes bacon and hot dogs)	Distribute up to 2 weeks past 'Sell By' date. Once opened, use or freeze within 2 days. Bacon must be thoroughly cooked before eating.
Sausage	Fresh (uncooked)	Cook or freeze within 2 days. Keep cold.
	Cooked	Use or freeze within 2 days of opening.
	Hard/dry (summer sausage)	Shelf stable. Store for 3 months on pantry shelf.

B. Ingham. 25 June 2012