



Code Date Definitions

Expiration Date – The expiration date is the date the manufacturer believes the product will start to lose its freshness. At some point after this date, product quality will start to deteriorate. In many cases the product is still useable and the manufacturer may give hunger relief organizations an extended period to use this product. Expiration dates are more common with perishable products.

Note: if perishable product is frozen on or before the “expiration” date, shelf life can be extended.

Sell By Date – Product should be sold to the consumer by this date. The manufacturer has determined that if the product is purchased by the date printed on the label the average consumer will use the product before quality deteriorates. “Sell by dates” are very common on perishable products and are starting to appear more and more on shelf stable products.

Note: if perishable product is frozen on or before the “Sell By” date, shelf life can be extended.

Use By Date – Product should be used by this date. After this date, quality may start to deteriorate. If the product is perishable it generally gets destroyed after the “use by” date unless it has been frozen on or prior to the date. In many cases, non-perishable product is still usable and the manufacturer may give hunger relief organizations an extended period to use this product.

Note: if perishable product is frozen on or before the “Use By” date, shelf life can be extended.

The type of date used and the length of time a product is safe to use once it reaches its date vary by manufacturer. Within reason, most non-perishable products are safe to consume after the date, but the product may start to lose some of its nutritional value and there may be some degradation in the color and/or texture of the product. Where possible it is best to follow manufacturer’s guidelines when dates need to be extended.

The use of toll-free consumer help/information lines for gaining information regarding code date extensions is not recommended because these help/information lines are in place for the general public and the operators may not be familiar with the nuances of code date extensions provided by the manufacturers.