LABEL DATES

Expiration or "Use By" date: Last day the product should be eaten or used for assured quality. Phrase most often used: "Do not use after (date)". Includes baby formula and baby foods.

Freshness or "Sell By" date: Last recommended date of sale that allows ample home storage time. Phrase most often used: "Sell by (date)". Includes milk, yogurt and eggs.

"Best if Used By" date: Date after which a product is not likely to be at peak quality or flavor. Includes prepared packaged foods, Rice/Soy Dream and most dry goods.

INTERPRETING DATES

Product	Discard After	
Milk	*4 – 7 days past stamped date	
Yogurt	*7 – 10 days past stamped date	
Soft Cheese	*(cottage, cream, ricotta) 1 wk. past stamped date	
Hard Cheese	*(cheddar, etc.) 3 – 4 wks. past stamped date	
Luncheon Meat	*4 days unopened, 3 – 5 days if opened	
Powdered Milk	*6 months past date if refrigerated	
Eggs	*3 – 5 weeks past stamped date	
Dry Cereal	6 – 12 months unopened	
Food in Jars	12 months past stamped date	
Canned Foods:	Non-Acidic (vegetables, soup)	2 – 5 years
	Acidic (tomato products)	12 months
Bread Products	7 days under refrigeration or at first sign of mold	
Rice/Pasta (dry)	1 year after receipt	

What do the dates mean?

SELL BY 3/15/16 ENJOY BY 3/15/16	This is a freshness date. Food is freshest by the date on the label, but still safe to eat after that date. Examples are milk (up to 1 week after the sell by date) and eggs (3-5 weeks after the sell by date).
BEST BY 3/15/16 BEST IF USED BY 3/15/16	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. You can eat non-acidic canned foods up to 2-5 years after this date. Examples are canned soup or vegetables.
EXP 3/15/16 USE BY 3/15/16	This is a true expiration date. After the expiration date, the food is not safe to eat and must be thrown away. Examples are baby food and infant formula.
Nothing	If there is no expiration date, use the can within one year from when you got it.
3/15/2016 or 07516	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.