



What Dates on Foods Mean



The codes and dates on food packages have many different meanings. If the food is past the date on the package it does NOT necessarily mean it is unsafe.

What it Says	What it Means
Sell By	The manufacturer recommends this is the last day the product is sold in a retail store. The product will remain safe and nutritious for some time after the date. This time depends on the type of product and storage conditions.
Expiration Date	Only appears on infant formula /Baby Food or Adult Nutrition Formulas. Must be used by the date on the package.
Best if Used By	Before this date the manufacturer assures the product is at its highest quality, but it can still be safely consumed for a period of time after this date. The length of time depends on the type of product and its storage.
Manufacturing or Packing Date	This date is listed on the outside of a case and is often shown after the letters “MFG”. This shows the date the product was produced by the manufacturer.
Code Dates	Code dates are a series of numbers stamped on products by the manufacturer to tell them when and where the product was produced. These numbers are should be used by consumers only in the case of a recall or complaint.

Donations from food manufacturers and retail stores are important to the Food Bank and provide low cost food options for your agency. These donated foods are often close to or past the date on the package. However, the Food Bank does not accept any food we think is unsafe or of poor quality.