



Worried your food is expired?

This worksheet can help you figure out what the date on your food means. All information is taken from the USDA:

https://www.fsis.usda.gov/shared/PDF/Food_Product_Dating.pdf?redirecthttp=true

What is dating?

“Open Dating” is a date stamped on a product’s package to help the store determine how long to display the product for sale...it is NOT a safety date.

Types of dates:

- A **“sell-by”** date tells the store how long to display the product for sale. You should buy the product before the date expires
- A **“best if used by (or before)”** date is recommended for best flavor or quality. It is not a purchase or safety date
- A **“use-by”** date is the last date recommended for the use of the product while at peak quality. The date has been determined by the manufacturer of the product

Safety:

If a product has a “use-by” date, follow that date. If product has a “sell-by” date or no date, cook or freeze product **by the times on the chart in this document**

Storage time general information:

Since product dates are not a guide for safe use of a product, how long can you store the food and still use it at top quality? Follow these tips:

- Purchase the product before the “use-by” or “expiration” date
- If perishable, take the food home immediately after purchase and refrigerate it. Freeze it if you can’t use it within the times **recommended on the chart**
- Once a perishable product is frozen, it does not matter if the date expires because foods kept frozen are safe to eat indefinitely.
- Follow handling recommendations on product
- **Consult the storage charts**

Charts:

Refrigerator Home Storage (at 40 °F or below) of Fresh or Uncooked Products

If product has a “use-by” date, follow that date. If product has a “sell-by” date or no date, cook or freeze the product by the times on the following chart.

Refrigerator Storage of Fresh or Uncooked Products

Product	Storage Times After Purchase
Poultry	1 or 2 days
Beef, Veal, Pork and Lamb	3 to 5 days
Ground Meat and Ground Poultry	1 or 2 days
Fresh Variety Meats (Liver, Tongue, Brain, Kidneys, Heart, Chitterlings)	1 or 2 days
Cured Ham, Cook-Before-Eating	5 to 7 days
Sausage from Pork, Beef or Turkey, Uncooked	1 or 2 days
Eggs	3 to 5 weeks

Refrigerator Home Storage (at 40 °F or below) of Processed Products Sealed at Plant

If product has a "use-by" date, follow that date. If product has a "sell-by" date or no date, cook or freeze the product by the times on the following chart.

Processed Product	Unopened, After Purchase	After Opening
Cooked Poultry	3 to 4 days	3 to 4 days
Cooked Sausage	3 to 4 days	3 to 4 days
Sausage, Hard/Dry, shelf-stable	6 weeks/pantry	3 weeks
Corned Beef, uncooked, in pouch with pickling juices	5 to 7 days	3 to 4 days
Vacuum-packed Dinners, Commercial Brand with USDA seal	2 weeks	3 to 4 days
Bacon	2 weeks	7 days
Hot dogs	2 weeks	1 week
Luncheon meat	2 weeks	3 to 5 days
Ham, fully cooked	7 days	slices, 3 days; whole, 7 days
Ham, canned, labeled "keep refrigerated"	9 months	3 to 4 days
Ham, canned, shelf stable	2 years/pantry	3 to 5 days
Canned Meat and Poultry, shelf stable	2 to 5 years/pantry	3 to 4 days

