

SHELF LIFE AFTER EXPIRATION DATE

SHELF STABLE

Food Item	Shelf Life After Code Date
Canned goods (low acidity)*	3 years
Canned goods (high acidity)**	18 months
Dry beans, rice, pasta, ramen	2 years
Boxed/bagged goods - cereal, crackers, mixes, etc.	1 year
Sauces, condiments, dressings	1 year
Beverages	1 year
Chips	2 months
Mayonaise/cream-based items	3 months
Baby food/adult formula	Discard after date

FROZEN

Food Item	Shelf Life After Code Date
All assorted meats/poultry	2 months
Fruits, vegetables	6 months
Ice cream	2 months

PRODUCE

Food Item	Shelf Life After Code Date
Packaged produce (bagged lettuce, etc.)	Discard if moldy, has a slimy look/feel, or is overly soft or discolored
Cut produce	Discard if moldy, has a slimy look or feel, or is overly soft or discolored

DAIRY/COOLER

Food Item	Shelf Life After Code Date
Juice	3 weeks
Milk	1 week
Cheese	1 week (soft), 1 month (hard)
Eggs	3 weeks
Yogurt, sour cream, dips	2 weeks
Salsa, pesto	Discard after date
Hummus	1 week
Prepared dishes or meals	3 days
Salads	3 days

BREAD/PASTRY

Food Item	Shelf Life After Code Date
Fresh	4 days
Frozen	1 month
Containing cream	Throw away if not kept refrigerated/frozen



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*Examples of low acidity canned goods: meat/poultry, soups, stews, pasta, potatoes, corn, carrots, spinach, peas, beets, beans, pumpkin

**Examples of high acidity canned goods: tomato products, fruits, sauerkraut, foods in vinegar-based sauces/dressings



FOOD RESCUE DONATION GUIDELINES

GENERAL GUIDELINES

While individual donors ultimately determine what is eligible to be donated from their brand, this document is intended to be used as a visual guide when preparing donations to ensure that all food is safe to consume. Discarding food that does not meet the following criteria is not a waste; you are actually protecting the at-risk hunger community that we help feed.

All donated food must:

- 1) Be in its original packaging, with no loss of sanitary barrier

ACCEPTABLE:



UNACCEPTABLE:



- 2) Contain a label with the product's name, full list of ingredients, net quantity of contents, and name and place of business of the manufacturer, packer or distributor

ACCEPTABLE:



UNACCEPTABLE:



Most items can be donated past their expiration date.

First use your company's guidelines to determine whether a product can be donated past code. For information on the guidelines Arkansas Foodbank uses to distribute food past its code date, please see the attached chart.

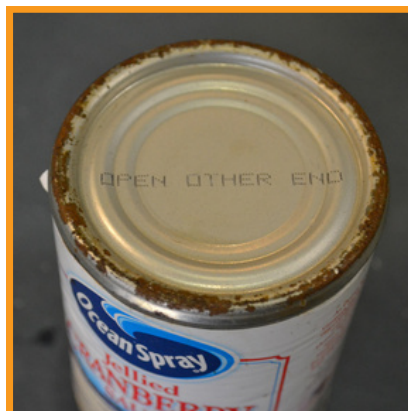
CANS - ACCEPTABLE:

- Minor dents
- All items must have their full ingredient label
- Safety seal must be intact
- Dented beverage cans



CANS - UNACCEPTABLE:

- Dents on seal
- Metal touching metal/ crimped over
- Puffy, bulging
- Rust
- Missing label
- Leaking
- Severely dented



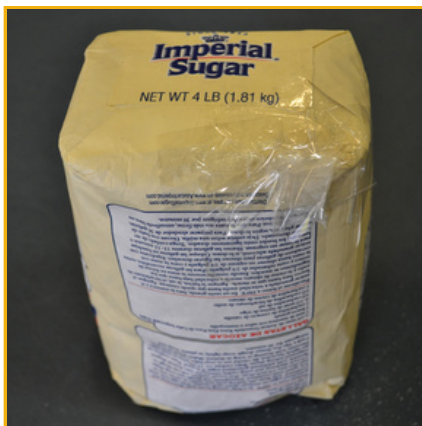
DRY GROCERY - ACCEPTABLE:

- Outer packaging damaged with inner seal intact
- Crushed top of plastic jugs (seal must be intact)
- Cosmetic Damage
- Individual units taped back to original packaging, containing label



DRY GROCERY - UNACCEPTABLE:

- Open or ripped bag that has been taped
- Open box with no inner seal (i.e. pasta)
- Missing/no ingredient label
- Jars missing inner seal



BREAD/ BAKERY/ PASTRIES ACCEPTABLE:

- Cosmetic damage
- Items approaching or just past best-by date
- Bread, pastries and other items with full packaging, label and no mold



BREAD/ BAKERY/ PASTRIES UNACCEPTABLE:

- No packaging/ open packaging (open-ended baguettes, self-serve bulk rolls, etc.)
- Open or torn packaging
- Mold, decay
- Missing/no ingredient label
- Items left outside for pick-up



DAIRY ACCEPTABLE:

- Discard broken eggs and donate any unbroken eggs
- Refrigerated juices, dips, sauces, etc
- Milk, cheese, yogurt, butter, etc
- Cosmetic damage



DAIRY UNACCEPTABLE:

- Puffy, bulging
- Missing/no ingredient label
- Items left out of temperature
- Open, leaking
- Broken seal



MEAT/ FROZEN ACCEPTABLE

Acceptable:

- Cooked fish or seafood
- Outer packaging damaged with inner seal intact
- Lunch meat, hot dogs, other deli items
- All beef, chicken, pork and turkey products
- All items from frozen department (pizzas, frozen vegetables, etc.)
- Uncooked fish or seafood



*** ALL MEAT MUST BE FROZEN ON OR BEFORE THE USE-BY DATE ***

MEAT/FROZEN UNACCEPTABLE:

- Tripe, tripas
- Open or exposed
- Leaking



- Discolored
- Discolored
- Discolored



- Missing/no ingredient label
- Items not frozen
- Freezer burn



- Loosened vacuum seal
- Puffy/bulging



PRODUCE ACCEPTABLE:

- Minor bruises
- Superficial spots
- Slightly green oranges
- Small sprouts

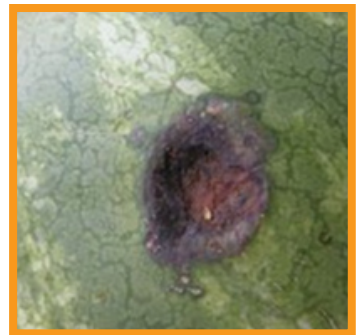


- Slight speckling
- Odd shapes
- Minor spots on surface
- Some brown at base



PRODUCE UNACCEPTABLE:

- Overripe
- Rot
- Green potatoes (solanine)
- Decay



- Wilted leaves
- Mold
- Chill damage
- Puffy/bulging packages



SHELF LIFE GUIDELINES

While inspecting donations for quality assurance, it is important to check the dates or codes on the packaging. These dates are commonly misunderstood as “expiration dates,” a date that signifies the item is no longer safe to eat. This is in fact not true for most items. Many non-perishable items are safe to eat long after the date on their packaging, and the shelf life of refrigerated and frozen foods can be extended if they are handled properly. Baby food and formula and over-the-counter medications are the only items that are required by federal law to have an actual expiration date.

Here are explanations of different code dating you may see on food packages:

Expiration Date- (“Expires 1/1/11”, “Do not use after 1/1/11”)

- Look for it on: Baby food and formula, medicines, vitamins, yeast, baking powder.
 - What it means: Do not distribute or consume infant formula, baby food, vitamins or medicines after the expiration date! Yeast and baking powder work less effectively after expiration, but are still safe to eat.

Sell By Date - (“Sell by 1/1/11”, also called “Pull Date”)

- Look for it on: Refrigerated foods such as milk, yogurt, cottage cheese, eggs, lunch meat, packaged salad mixes.
 - What it means: This tells the store how long to display the product for sale. If the food has been handled properly, it may still be safe to eat past this date.

Use By or Quality Date - (“Best if used by 1/1/11” or “Use before 1/1/11”)

- Look for it on: Crackers, cookies, cereals, canned goods, and other dry, shelf stable foods.
 - What it means: This date is the manufacturer’s recommendation for how long the food will be at peak quality. After the quality date, the food is still safe to eat but slowly begins to lose nutrients and the quality begins to lessen.

Pack Date or Coded Date - (“Packed on 1/1/11”, “A70319R 23:16”)

- Look for it on: Canned food, crackers, cookies, spices, and other dry shelf-stable foods.
 - What it means: These dates represent the date on which the food was packaged or processed for sale. They are not intended for consumers but rather are used by manufacturers and retailers to track inventory, rotate food on shelves, and locate items in case of a recall. Since dates are printed at the manufacturer’s discretion, their meanings may be different or each product line, and therefore be difficult to decipher. Usually this food is safe to eat for a long time past the date, as long as the packaging is not damaged.