



# Food Bank of Delaware Product Extension Guidelines

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The Food Bank of Delaware is able to distribute food items after the date on the package, following USDA guidelines. **This food is still safe to eat!** Product manufacturers use different types of 'code dating' to ensure that consumers receive their product at peak quality. Once a product is past code date, many manufacturers donate it to food banks. The following information will provide reference for the possible extended life of food products.

This guide will explain what code dating is and it will offer a series of charts that offer guidance on how long different foods can be safely consumed past the date stamped on the packaging.

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This guide offers a thorough list of foods that may be distributed by the Food Bank of Delaware, however, some items that you receive may not be covered by the guidance included. Please reach out to the food bank for further support if needed.

# Product Extension Guidelines



## What is Code Dating and what do they mean?

Dates are printed voluntarily on many food items, but they are not required by the Federal Government. These dating systems enable manufacturers and retailers to rotate their stock and can help with product tracing.

It should be noted that the dates found on products are the food manufacturer's recommendations regarding optimal quality of the product. The dates are not necessarily guides for food safety.

Many canned and boxed products are safe to eat long after the date on the container, and the shelf life of refrigerated and frozen foods can be extended if they are handled properly.

The following are examples you may see on different food packaging:

- “Expiration Date” (Examples: “Expires 11/15/22” or “Do not use after 11/15/22”)
  - Look for it on: Baby food and formula, medicines, vitamins.
  - What it means: Do not distribute infant formula, baby food, vitamins, or medicines after the expiration date.
  
- “Pack Date” (Examples: “Packed on 03/01/2022” or “22:5306412” or “KL064”)
  - Look for it on: Canned food, crackers, cookies, spices.
  - What it means: This is the date the food was packaged. A code is often used that cannot be understood by the general public, often numbering days sequentially such that January 1 is day 001 and December 31 is day 365 (366 in leap years). Usually this food is of good quality and safe to eat for a long time past the date.
  
- “Sell By” Date (Example: “Sell by January 1, 2022”)
  - Look for it on: Refrigerated foods such as milk, yogurt, cottage cheese, eggs, lunch meat, packaged salad mixes.
  - What it means: The store must sell these foods before the code date listed and will often donate these foods when they are close to date. If the food has been handled properly it is still safe to eat and the quality is good.
  
- “Use By” or Quality Date (Examples: “Best if used by 1/1/22” or “Use Before 1/1/22”)
  - Look for it on: Crackers, cookies, cold cereals, and other dry, shelf stable food.
  - 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 may slowly lose nutrients and the quality could lessen.

# Product Extension Guidelines



## Inspecting the Product

Depending on the product (dry, refrigerated or frozen) and packaging (cans, boxes, bags, shrink wrapped) food can remain edible for several days, months, or even years past their code date. However, it is important to always examine the packaging to make sure it has not been damaged too much so that the food is no longer safe to eat.

- Do Not Consume Food If:
  - Leaking or stained
  - Bloated can
  - Rusty can
  - Can is badly dented, crimped or pinched – especially on the top or bottom seals
  - Container is cracked
  - Foul odor
  - Safety seals are broken or missing
  - Lids are loose or missing
  - Foods exhibit changed color or odor
  - Do not consume meat, fish, poultry or dairy products that feel warm to the touch prior to cooking
  - **Never taste suspicious foods – if in doubt, throw the food away**
  
- Do Not Consume Food from Boxes or Shrink-Wrapped Product If:
  - Shrink wrap or inside bag:
    - Is torn or leaking
    - Has moldy or foreign objects inside
    - Seals are ripped
  - Box without an inside bag:
    - Is open or torn
    - Has live or dead insects, webs, or droppings
    - Is stained or wet

# Product Extension Guidelines



Shelf Stable Foods		
Food Group	Product Description	Date past extension
Grains	Bread, Pita	3 – 5 Months, Frozen
	Canned Pasta (spaghetti, ravioli)	2 – 5 Years
	Cornmeal/Polenta	6 – 12 Months
	Crackers – (Graham, Animal)	6 – 9 Months
	Crackers – (Regular)	8 Months
	Granola	6 – 9 Months
	Macaroni and Cheese	1 Year
	Oats (Old Fashioned/Rolled/Steel Cut)	4 Months
	Pasta/Noodles/Couscous	2 Years
	Pasta Mixes/Sides (Hamburger Helper)	2 Years
	Popcorn – (Microwave Bags)	6 – 12 Months
	Popcorn – (Popped, Commercial)	2 – 3 Months
	Popcorn – (Dry Kernels in Container)	2 Years
	Rice – (White)	2 Years
	Rice – (Brown)	1 Year
Stuffing/Breadcrumbs/Croutons	9 – 12 Months	
Tortillas – (Flour)	3 Months, (6 Frozen)	
Tortillas – (Corn)	1 Month, (3 Frozen)	
Vegetables	Low-Acid Canned Vegetables: (Beans, Beets, Carrots, Corn, Peas, Potatoes, Pumpkin, Spinach)	2 – 5 Years
	High-Acid Canned Vegetables: (Pickles, Sauerkraut, Tomatoes, and foods treated with vinegar-based sauces)	12 – 18 Months
	Dried Vegetables	1 Year
	Vegetable Juice (100%)	12 Months
Fruits	Applesauce	12 – 18 Months
	Canned Fruits – (In Juice or Light Syrup)	12 – 18 Months
	Canned Cranberry Sauce	2 Years
	Dried Fruits	6 Months
	100% Fruit Juices/Nectars	12 Months
Dairy	Canned Milk – (Evaporated/Condensed)	1 Year
	Dry Milk	3 – 5 Years
	Shelf-Stable Milk – (Soy, Almond, Rice, etc.)	6 Months
	Parmesan cheese	1 Year
	Cream Sauces	6 – 12 Months

# Product Extension Guidelines



Protein	Bacon – (Cooked, Shelf-Stable)	6 Months
	Beans, Peas, Lentils – (Canned)	2 – 5 Years
	Beans, Peas, Lentils – (Dry)	1 – 2 Years
	Beef, Dried – (Beef Jerky)	1 Year
	Chili	2 – 5 Years
	Ham – (Canned)	6 – 9 Months
	Jerky, commercially dried	1 Year
	Fish, Canned (Tuna, Salmon, Sardines)	3 Years
	Nuts – (Cans/Jars, Shelled)	1 Year
	Nuts – (Bagged)	6 – 12 Months
	Nuts – (Raw)	4 Months
	Nut Butters:	
	Almond Butter	1 Year
	Peanut Butter	2 years
	Meat and Poultry – (Canned)	2 – 3 Years
	Meat/Poultry/Seafood – (Retort Pouches)	Must be consumed by expiration date on package
	Meat Substitute Product (Bacon Bits)	1 Year
Sausage – (Dried, Hard, Shelf-Stable)	6 Weeks	
Stews, Canned – (Chicken/Beef)	2 – 5 Years	
Textured Protein Products (TVP)	2 Years	
Baby Items	Cereals	Must be consumed
	Formula	
	Baby food, canned or jar	
Breakfast Items	Cold Cereal	1 Year
	Granola	6 – 9 Months
	Granola Bars	6 – 9 Months
	Hot Cereal – (Grits, Instant Oatmeal, Farina)	1 Year
	Pancake/Waffle/Biscuit Mix	9 Months
Beverages	Coffee:	
	Whole Bean	3 – 5 Months
	Ground	2 Years
	Instant	1 Year
	Tea – (Instant)	2 – 3 Years
	Tea – (Bagged)	18 – 36 Years
	Tea – (Leaves)	2 Years
	Carbonated Beverages	3 Months
	Powdered Drink Mixes	18 – 24 Months
	Water	Indefinitely
Hot Chocolate Mixes	1 – 2 Years	

# Product Extension Guidelines



Baking Items	Baking Mixes:	
	Biscuit Mix	9 Months
	Brownie/Cake Mix	12 – 18 Months
	Baking Powder	18 Months
	Baking Soda	2 – 3 Years, indefinite if dry
	Chia Seeds	18 Months
	Chocolate:	
	(Unsweetened Powder, Semi-Sweet Chips)	1 – 2 Years
	Coconut – (Shredded)	
	Cornstarch	1 Year
	Cornmeal	18 – 24 Months
	Flax Seeds	6 – 12 Months
	Flour – (Whole Wheat)	6 Months
	Flour – (All Purpose, White)	1 Year
	Gelatin Mixes	1 Year
	Honey	10 – 12 Months
	Milk – (Canned; Condensed/Evaporated)	2 Years
	Milk, powdered	1 Year
	Molasses	1 Year
	Oils:	
	Canola Oil	1 Year
	Coconut Oil	3 Years
	Olive Oil	6 – 12 Months
	Oil Spray	2 Years
	Pectin	Date on package
	Pie Filling, canned	2 Years
	Pudding Mix	1 Year
	Pumpkin – (Canned)	2 – 5 Years
	Shortening	1 Year
	Spices, ground	2 Years
	Spices, whole	4 Years
	Sugar – (Brown, Granulated, Powdered)	18 – 24 Months
	Sugar Substitutes	2 Years
	Syrup:	
Genuine Maple Syrup – (Glass Container)	4 Years	
Genuine Maple Syrup – (Plastic Container)	2 Years	
Syrup – (Commercial, Plastic Container)	1 Year	
Sweeteners – (Artificial)	2 Years	
Yeast	Date on package	

# Product Extension Guidelines



Condiments	Barbeque Sauce	1 Year
	Cheese Sauce	9 Months
	Chocolate – (Flavored Syrup)	2 Years
	Cocktail/Chili Sauces	1 Year
	Dry Sauces and Gravy Mixes	2 Years
	Gravy – (Jars/Cans)	2 – 5 Years
	Hoisin	18 – 24 Months
	Honey	2 Years – safe to use after crystallization
	Horseradish	1 Year
	Hot Sauce	6 Months
	Jams/Jellies	6 – 18 Months
	Ketchup	1 Year
	Marinades	1 Year
	Mayonnaise	3 – 6 Months
	Mustard	1 – 2 Years
	Olives	18 Months
	Pickles	1 Year
	Relish	2 – 5 Years
	Sauerkraut	12 – 18 Months
	Salad Dressings	10 – 12 Months
	Salsa	1 Year
Soy/Teriyaki Sauces	3 Years	
Syrup	1 Year	
Taco Sauce – (Jar/Can)	1 Year	
Tahini	1 Year	
Vinegar	2 Years	
Soups	Bouillon Cubes – (Dry/Mixes)	1 – 2 Years
	Broth	2 – 5 Years
	Canned Soups/Stews – (Non-Tomato Based)	2 years
	Tomato-Based Soups	12-18 months
Tomato Products	Pasta/Pizza Sauce – (Canned)	12 – 18 Months
	Pasta/Pizza Sauce – (Glass Jars)	12 – 18 Months
	Salsa	12 – 18 Months
	Tomatoes – (Canned): Crushed, Diced, Pureed, Sauce, Whole	12 – 18 Months
	Tomato Paste – (Canned)	2 Years

# Product Extension Guidelines



Snacks & Desserts	Candy	9 – 12 months
	Chips	2 Months
	Cookies	4 Months
	Crackers	8 Months
	Fruit Snacks, gummy	6 – 9 Months
	Graham/Animal Crackers	6 Months
	Frosting	10 Months
	Marshmallows	1 Year
	Pretzels	6 – 8 Months
	Toaster pastries	6 Months
Specialty items	Nutritional Beverages (Boost, Ensure, Carnation Instant Breakfast)	
	Powdered	6 months
	Liquid	Must be consumed by expiration date on package

- **Tips on Storing Canned and Boxed Food:**

- Store cans and boxes off the floor, either on a pallet or shelf and 18 inches away from the wall so air can circulate.
- Store canned and boxed goods in a clean, dry, and cool area (below 85°F).
- Extremely hot (over 100°F) and cold (below 30°F) temperatures can damage canned goods and shorten shelf life.
- Always rotate your stock—First in-First out



# Product Extension Guidelines



Refrigerated and Frozen Foods			
Food Group	Product Description	Date past extension	
		Refrigerated	Frozen
Dairy	Butter	1-3 months	6-9 months
	Buttermilk	10 days	Do not freeze
	Cream cheese	10 days	Do not freeze
	Cottage cheese	2 weeks	Do not freeze
	Cheese, hard	6 months	6 months
	Cheese, soft	1-2 weeks	6 months
	Cheese, processed	3-4 weeks	Do not freeze
	Cheese, shredded	1 month	3-4 months
	Cream, half & half	3-4 days	4 months,
	Cream, heavy	10 days	3-4 months
	Coffee creamer	3 weeks	Do not freeze
	Dough	No extension past printed date	Do not freeze
	Eggs	3-5 weeks	Do not freeze
	Egg substitutes	10 days	Do not freeze
	Margarine	6 months	12 months
	Milk	1 week	1-3 month
	Sour cream	2-3 weeks	Do not freeze
Whipped cream, aerosol	3-4 weeks	Do not freeze	
Yogurt	10-14 days	1-2 months	
Prepared Foods	Chicken, roasted/fried	3-4 days	4-6 months
	Cooked vegetables	3-4 days	1-2 months
	Fruit, cut	No extension	-
	Guacamole	5-7 days	6 months
	Hummus	2 months	Do not freeze
	Hummus, traditional - no preservatives, not pasteurized	7 days	Do not freeze
	Main dish meals	3-4 days	2-3 months
	Pasta, fresh	1 week	1 month
	Rices	3-4 days	1-2 months
	Salad (macaroni, egg, potato, chicken, etc.)	3-4 days	Do not freeze
	Soups/stews	2-3 days	4-6 months
	Spinach, bagged	No extension	-

# Product Extension Guidelines



Items Purchased Frozen	Desserts, pies, baked goods	Only thaw if consuming	1-2 months
	Dinners		3-4 months
	Dough, bread		1 month
	Dough, cookie		3 months
	Fish, breaded		4-6 months
	Fruit		4 months
	Ice cream		2-4 months
	Juice concentrates		2 years
	Popsicles		6 months
	Soy-based meat substitutes		12-18 months
	Vegetables		8 months
	Waffles & pancakes		2 months

Fresh & Frozen Meats			
Fish/Seafood (uncooked)	Crab, canned	6 months	Do not freeze
	Crab, legs	3-5 days	9-12 months
	Fatty fish (salmon, mackerel, perch, bluefish)	2 days	3-6 months
	Lean Fish (cod, flounder, haddock, pollock)	2 days	8-12 months
	Lobster tail	4 days	4-6 months
	Oysters, shucked	1-2 days	3-4 months
	Scallops, raw	1-2 days	3-6 months
	Shrimp, raw	2 days	9-12 months
Fish/Seafood Cooked	Fatty fish	5-7 days	1-3 months
	Lean fish	5-7 days	1-3 months
	Shellfish	5-7 days	2-4 months
Meats, Raw	Beef roasts/steaks	3-5 days	6-12 months
	Chicken/turkey	2 days	6-12 months
	Ground meats	2 days	3-6 months
	Lamb roasts/steaks	3-5 days	6-12 months
	Pork roasts/steaks	3-5 days	6-12 months
Meats, Processed	Bacon	1 week	1-3 months
	Chicken, fried	4 days	4 months
	Chicken, nuggets/patties	2 days	3 months
	Ham	2 weeks	6 months
	Hot dogs	2 weeks	1-2 months
	Lunch meats	2 weeks	1-2 months
	Pepperoni	1 months	2 months
	Sausage, raw	2 days	1-2 months
Sausage, smoked or patties	1 week	1-2 months	

# Product Extension Guidelines



## Tips on Storing Refrigerated Food:

- Keep all chilled food refrigerated at 40° F or below until consumption.
- Store raw and cooked foods separately to prevent juice from raw food leaking onto cooked food.
- Store raw meat, fish, poultry etc. on the bottom, and ready-to-eat foods above them.
- Store raw and cooked foods separately to prevent juice from raw food leaking onto cooked food.
- Store eggs in their original carton and try to have them in the coldest part of the refrigerator.
- Leave space for air to circulate between items in the refrigerator.
- Rotate stock so that older foods are distributed first.

## Tips on Storing Frozen Food:

- If food remains continuously frozen, it will last much longer than if it is exposed to changing temperatures. Keep all frozen food at 0° F or below until distribution.
- Leave meat, poultry, and seafood in the original packaging when distributing. It is unsafe to open and repack these foods.
- Don't crowd the freezer, cold air needs to circulate.
- Freezer burn is a food quality issue, not a food safety issue. To reduce freezer burn, wrap food in airtight packaging.

## Tips on Storing Prepared Foods:

- Prepared foods should be kept refrigerated until distributed. These foods are perishable and leaving them at room temperature will shorten their shelf life.

# Product Extension Guidelines



Fresh Fruits & Vegetables				
Food Group	Product Description	Pantry	Refrigerator	Freezer
Fruits	Apples	3 Weeks	4-6 Weeks	Do not freeze
	Apricots	Until ripe	2-5 Days	Do not freeze
	Avocados	Until ripe	3-4 Days	Do not freeze
	Bananas	Until ripe	3 Days	2-3 Months
	Berries	Until ripe	3-6 Days	12 Months
	Blueberries	Until ripe	10 Days	12 Months
	Cherimoya	Until ripe	4 Days	10-12 Months
	Cherries	Until ripe	7 Days	12 Months
	Citrus Fruit	10 Days	1-3 Weeks	Do not freeze
	Coconut, whole	1 Week	2-3 Weeks	Do not freeze
	Cranberries	-	2 Months	12 Months
	Dates	2 Months	12 Months	1-2 Years
	Grapes	1 Day	1 Week	Whole, 1 Month
	Guava	Until ripe	2-4 Days	Do not freeze
	Kiwi	Until ripe	3-6 Days	Do not freeze
	Mango	3-5 Days	1 Week	6-8 Months
	Melons	Until ripe, then 7 days	Whole - 2 Weeks; Cut - 2-4 Days	Do not freeze
	Papaya	3-5 Days	1 Week	6-8 Months
	Pears	Until ripe, then 1-2 Days	3-5 Days	Do not freeze
	Pineapple	Until ripe, then 1-2 Days	5-7 Days	10-12 Months
Plantains	Until ripe, then 1-2 Days	3-5 Days	10-12 Months	
Pomegranate	2-5 Days	1-3 Months	10-12 Months	
Stonefruit	Until ripe, then 1-2 Days	3-5 Days	Do not freeze	

# Product Extension Guidelines



Vegetables	Artichokes, whole	1-2 Days	1-2 Weeks	Do not freeze
	Asparagus	-	3-4 Days	5 Months
	Beans/Peas	-	3-5 Days	8 Months
	Beets	1 Day	7-14 Days	6-8 Months
	Bok Choy	-	2-3 Days	10-12 Months
	Broccoli	-	3-5 Days	10-12 Months
	Brussel Sprouts	-	3-5 Days	10-12 Months
	Cabbage	-	1-2 Weeks	10-12 Months
	Carrots/Parsnips	-	2-3 Weeks	10-12 Months
	Cauliflower	-	3-5 Days	10-12 Months
	Celery	-	1-2 Weeks	10-12 Months
	Corn on the cob	-	1-2 Days	8 Months
	Cucumbers	-	4-6 Days	Do not freeze
	Eggplant	1 Day	4-7 Days	6-8 Months
	Garlic	1 Month, whole	3-14 Days, individual	1 Month
	Ginger Root	2-5 Days	2-3 Weeks	6 Months
	Greens	-	1-4 Days	10-12 Months
	Herbs	-	7-10 Days	1-2 Months
	Leeks	-	1-2 Weeks	10-12 Months
	Lettuce, iceberg romaine	-	1-2 Weeks	Do not freeze
	Lettuce, leaf, spinach	-	3-7 Days	Do not freeze
	Mushrooms	-	3-7 Days	10-12 Months
	Okra	1 Day	2-3 Days	10-12 Months
	Onions	1 Month	2 Months	10-12 Months
	Onions, spring or green	-	1 Week	10-12 Months
	Peppers	-	4-14 Days	6-8 Months
	Potatoes	1-2 Months	1-2 Weeks	Do not freeze
	Pumpkins	2-3 Months	3-5 Months	Do not freeze
	Radishes	-	10-14 Days	Do not freeze
	Rhubarb	-	3-7 Days	Do not freeze
	Rutabaga	1 Week	2-3 Weeks	8-10 Months
	Squash, summer	1-5 Days	4-5 Days	10-12 Months
	Squash, winter	2-6 Weeks	1-3 Months	10-12 Months
	Tomatoes	Until ripe, then 7 Days	2-7 Days	2 Months
Turnips	-	2 Weeks	8-10 Months	
Zucchini	1-5 Days	4-5 Days	10-12 Months	

# Product Extension Guidelines



## Tips on Storing Fresh Produce:

- Avoid produce with bruises, mold, or cuts.
- Never store produce below raw meat or fish in the refrigerator.
- Promptly store produce that requires refrigeration. Did the store have it in the refrigerator?
- Refrigerate fresh produce within two hours of cutting or peeling.
- Wash the outside of all whole produce (melons, tomatoes etc) before cutting to reduce risk of bacteria being transferred from the outside to the inside when being cut.
- Most fruits and vegetables are of the best quality when kept refrigerated. There are, however, some exceptions:

<b>Where to Store Fruits and Vegetables</b>		
<i>At Room Temp</i>	<i>Counter – move to fridge when ripe</i>	<i>Refrigerator</i>
Bananas Basil Cucumber Eggplant Garlic Grapefruit Green Beans Lemons/Limes Onions Oranges Potatoes Sweet Potatoes Summer Squash Winter Squash Watermelon Zucchini	Apricots Avocados Kiwi Mangoes Melons Nectarines Papayas Peaches Pears Pineapple Plums	Apples Asparagus Berries Corn on Cob Broccoli Brussel Sprouts Cabbage Carrots Cauliflower Cherries Cilantro Dark Leafy Greens/Lettuce Grapes Leeks Parsley Peas Pomegranate

*\*Further produce purchasing, safety, and storage information available upon request\**

# Product Extension Guidelines



## Loss of Electricity

- Keep refrigerator and freezer closed as much as possible.
- If unopened, refrigerators can hold temperature for about four hours; freezer for about 48 hours.
- When the power comes back on—check the thermometers—if the freezer thermometer reads 40° or below, the FDA says the food is safe and may be refrozen.
- If there are no thermometers, check packages carefully for signs of thawing.
- Refrigerated food above 40° for two hours or more should be thrown out.
- *When in doubt, throw it out!*

# Product Extension Guidelines



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<https://www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/sites/default/files/2023-01/fn579.pdf>



# Product Extension Guidelines



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