



saving fresh FEEDING COMMUNITY



GUIDELINE FOR DISTRIBUTING FOOD PAST THE BEST BEFORE DATE

These guidelines are used to help our team with distribution to our partners, ensuring the freshest and best quality service to those in need.

TIME FRAME PAST BEST BEFORE DATE FOR DISTRIBUTION	PRODUCE	JUICE & SOFT DRINKS	BREAD & BAKERY	PACKAGED GRAINS, CEREALS & BAKED GOODS	MEAT & SEAFOOD	DELI MEATS	PREPARED FOODS	MILK & NON-DAIRY ALTERNATIVES	CULTURED DAIRY	CHEESE	FATS	GENERAL GROCERY (SHELF STABLE)	NON-FOOD	INFANT FORMULA & NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENTS
PRODUCT DESCRIPTIONS	Fruit/Vegetables - Whole, Uncut, Unpeeled, Undamaged	Fruit & Vegetable Juices & Soft Drinks	Loaves, Rolls, Bagels, Muffins	Granola, Flours, Rices, Dry Pastas, Cookies, Crackers, Breakfast/Lunch Cereal Bars	Packaged & Bulk Meats, Poultry, Fish	Deli Meats, Sausages	Prepared Meals, Fresh Pasta, Cooked Meats, Mixed Salads, Soups, Stews, Cut Produce	Milk (Fresh, Powdered, Canned, UHT tetrapack): Soy & Almond Beverages	Yogurt, Kefir, Sour Cream	Cottage Cheese, Cream, Soft & Hard Cheeses	Butter, Margarine, Cooking oils (most)	Canned Pastas, Canned Meats/Fish, Tomato Sauces, Condiments, etc.	Laundry Detergent, Mixed Product Pallets, Deodorants, Body Washes, Diapers, Infant Wipes	Note: These products contain Expiry Dates - not Best Before Dates
ROOM TEMPERATURE	Fresh, whole 1-7 days	Less than 2 hours (if refrigeration needed)	Up to 1 week	N/A	Less than 2 hours	Less than 2 hours (if refrigeration needed)	Less than 2 hours	Less than 2 hours (if refrigeration needed)	Less than 2 hours	Less than 2 hours	Less than 2 hours (if refrigeration needed)	N/A	N/A	DO NOT DISTRIBUTE PAST EXPIRY DATE
REFRIGERATED	Fresh, whole: leafy greens 1 day - 2 months (depending on produce and condition)	7-10 days (if refrigeration needed)	2 weeks	N/A	3-4 days whole pieces; 1-2 days ground; 1-2 days seafood/fish	3-5 days deli counter; 7 days packaged	1-3 days meal items; 3-4 days cut fruits and vegetables	1-2 days (if refrigeration needed)	1-2 weeks cultured	1-2 weeks cottage cheese; 3-8 months hard; 1-2 months soft	1-5 months	N/A	N/A	
FROZEN	1 year	1 year	3 months	N/A	Beef, lamb, pork, veal, poultry 12 months; poultry pieces 6 months; ground meat 2-3 months; fish 2-6 months; shellfish 2-4 months	2-3 months	4 months	6 months (texture may change)	1-3 months cultured (texture will change)	6-12 months hard cheese blocks; 3-6 months soft blocks	6-12 months	N/A	N/A	
CANNED/JARRED/BOTTLED	N/A	1 year	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1 year	N/A	N/A	6-12 months (shelf stable oils)	1-2 years	1 year	
BOXED/BAGGED	N/A	6-12 months	Up to 1 week	6-12 months	N/A	N/A	N/A	UHT - 6 months. Powdered*	N/A	N/A	N/A	6-12 months	1 year	

Adapted from Food Banks Canada (February 2019)

(See over...)



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*Milk powder:

Temperature is a critical quality factor for milk powder. Keep milk powder cool.

Best Before Date:

This gives consumers information as to when the product is at its best - with sensory qualities as acceptable as the day it was made when stored under appropriate conditions and packaging is intact. Best Before Dates indicate the shelf life of foods. They are not indicators of food safety. Some manufacturers changed their wording in 2018 to "Better Before".

Expiry Date:

This tells consumers that the product may not be providing them with the nutrients expected of the product and that they should no longer consume it after that date. Products with Expiry Dates must not be shared past the date on the packaging.

Products With Expiry Dates Include:

Infant formula (canned or boxed, liquid or powdered) and many **Nutritional Supplements and Meal Replacements** (canned, boxed or ready to use, liquid or powdered). Note that baby foods for older babies and toddlers have Best Before dates, not Expiry Dates.

Food Products and their ability to be shared should always be based on:

1. Ensuring the product has been handled safely (i.e. chilled product is kept chilled).
2. Assessing all packaging for integrity (i.e. dents, creases, etc.) based on Food Banks Canada Safe Food Handling Standards.
3. That the product is at a level of quality (i.e. taste and smell) that is still worth sharing.
4. That the Manufacturer's Branding will not be compromised if the product is shared.

The Food Bank of Waterloo Region adheres to the Safe Food for Canadians Act (SFCA) and the Safe Food for Canadians Regulations (SFCR).

NOTE: This information is to be used as a guide only. It was developed based on general knowledge, industry practices and the understanding that Best Before Dates are about sensory quality.

For Reference:

This document was adapted from a Food Banks Canada resource created in January 2011 and updated in February 2019.

The original document can be found at <http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Educational%20Materials/EH/FPS/Food/FoodBanksCanadaGuidelinesforFoodShelfLife2013.pdf>.