

DECIPHERING DATES ON PRODUCTS



Food date labels have little to do with safety and are only loosely related to quality. Many foods will still be good to eat well after those dates.

Here's how to sort out just what those dates mean:

BEST IF USED BY / BEST BEFORE

These dates refer to peak quality or freshness. They do not mean the food is spoiled or unsafe. Food with these dates should be safe to eat after the date has passed.

SELL BY

Ignore these dates as they are meant for store staff. They actually build in quality so that if the food is sold by that date, you will have top-quality shelf life once it's home.

FREEZE BY

One way to extend the life of food beyond its date is to freeze it. It's like pushing the pause button on your food.

BEWARE THE DANGER ZONE

The main criterion for evaluating food safety is the amount of time food spends in the temperature "danger zone" (40 - 120°F). Food left in a hot car for too long could be unsafe even before the date on the package. Also, be sure your fridge is kept below 40°F.

USE YOUR EYES AND NOSE

For the most part, you can trust your senses to know when food has gone bad. The products to be careful with are those that pregnant women are told to avoid.

For more tips, visit SaveTheFood.com.

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