

Best Before Timetable

Most people confuse the terms "expiry date" and "best before date." This confusion continues to be a major source of avoidable food waste in Canada. Only five foods should not be consumed past the expiry date: infant formula, meal replacements, formulated liquid diets (medical), very low-energy foods (medical), and nutritional supplements. Everything else is edible after the best before date has passed. Always use your senses to evaluate food quality if food is past the best before date.

While food may be edible past the best before date, non-profits cannot always use this type of food. Please try to donate food as fresh as possible.

BBD = Best Before Date

FOOD CATEGORY	ITEMS	DONATE BY	CONSUME BY
PRODUCE 	Perishable fresh fruits and vegetables	No spoilage, blemishes, visible decay, mold or bio-degrading smell	No spoilage, blemishes, visible decay, mold or bio-degrading smell
	Shelf stable canned fruits and vegetables, pickles, sauces, or pastes	6 months past BBD	1 year past BBD
DAIRY 	Perishable milk (including dairy alternatives), butter, yogurt, cheese, ice cream, sour cream	On or before BBD	2 weeks past BBD IF FROZEN 2-3 months past BBD
	Shelf stable evaporated, powdered, or milk alternatives	6 months past BBD	1 year past BBD
	Shelf stable baby formula, supplemental beverages (i.e.: Ensure)	1 month prior to expiry date	Expiry date
MEAT & FISH / EGGS & SOY / LEGUMES / NUT PRODUCTS & NUTS 	Raw meat and fish	Before BBD or FREEZE on or before BBD date to extend shelf life Sushi cannot be rescued	BBD or IF FROZEN : Beef, lamb, pork, whole poultry: 1 year past BBD Poultry pieces: 6 months past BBD Ground meat: 2-3 months past BBD Fish: 2-6 months past BBD
	Cooked luncheon meats, tofu, eggs	On or before BBD	1 week past BBD
	Shelf stable canned meat, fish, beans, chickpeas, nuts, nut butter, peanut butter, seeds, spam	6 months past BBD	1 year past BBD
BREAD / CRACKERS & CEREAL / GRAIN 	Perishable bread, buns, bagels, pitas, tortillas, flat bread, na'an, matzah	No spoilage, blemishes, visible decay, mold or bio-degrading smell	No spoilage, blemishes, visible decay, mold or bio-degrading smell
	Dry, shelf stable cereal, crackers, flour, oats, pasta, rice, quinoa, meals or sides, energy bars	6 months past BBD	1 year past BBD
	Meal replacement or supplement bars	3 weeks prior to expiry date	Expiry date
BAKED GOODS / SNACKS / DESSERTS 	Perishable cakes, cookies, pies, danishes, chocolate, pudding	Before BBD or FREEZE on or before BBD date to extend shelf life	72 hours past BBD IF FROZEN 1 month past BBD
	Shelf stable cookies, chips, popcorn, bagged snacks, snack cakes, granola bars	6 months past BBD	1 year past BBD
PREPARED 	Pre-cooked or ready-to-eat meals; deli salads, pizza, sandwiches	Immediately or FREEZE to extend shelf life. Must not have been "plated", exposed to public touch, or temperature-abused	72 hours past BBD IF FROZEN 1 month past BBD
	Frozen dinners, microwavable meals	3 months past BBD	1 year past BBD
	Shelf stable canned soups, stews, meals	6 months past BBD	1 year past BBD
	Shelf stable baby food	1 month prior to BBD	1 year past BBD
CONDIMENTS 	Frozen sauces, gravies	3 months past BBD	6 months past BBD
	Shelf stable mustard, relish, ketchup, jam, margarine, mayonnaise, oil, salad dressing, vinegars, spices, sauces, toppings	6 months past BBD	1 year past BBD
BEVERAGES 	Juice, water, coconut water	30 days past BBD	3-6 months past BBD
	Other drinks; coffee, tea, sport or energy drinks, crystals	30 days past BBD	3-6 months past BBD