

FOOD PRODUCT EXPIRATION DATES



There are no uniform or universally accepted descriptions used on food labels for expiration dating excluding infant formula, in the United States.

As a result, there are a wide variety of phrases used on labels to describe quality dates. Examples of commonly used phrases:

“BEST IF USED BY/BEFORE”

This date indicates when a product will be of best flavor or quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.

“SELL-BY”

This date tells the store how long to display the product for sale for inventory management. It is not a safety date.

“USE-BY”

This date is the last date recommended for the use of the product while at peak quality. It is not a safety date, except for when used on infant formula.

Food can be donated after the quality date passes. The quality of perishable products may deteriorate after the date passes, but the products should still be wholesome if no visible signs of spoilage.

Consumers, food banks and other charitable organizations should evaluate the quality of the product prior to its distribution and consumption to determine whether there are noticeable changes in wholesomeness.

For more information, visit:

[USDA.gov](https://www.usda.gov)

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services