



## PRODUCT DATING INFORMATION

**Sharp Shopper Grocery Outlet has been providing quality grocery products at greatly discounted prices to consumers since 1988.** Sometimes products are sold close to or past the date on the package. Because of this we are occasionally asked about product dates with respect to food safety. These dates have little to do with food safety according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In this brochure, we've assembled information from various sources to help our customers better understand product dating.

Please remember all products are sold with 100% satisfaction guarantee. If you are not completely satisfied, you can return the product for a full refund.

Sharp Shopper stores operate under state and federal Department of Agriculture regulations as do all traditional grocery stores.

Should you have any concerns about a product on our shelves or purchased from our store, please contact the store manager or email us at [customercomments@sharpshopper.net](mailto:customercomments@sharpshopper.net). Our desire is that you are satisfied with every purchase!



# Product Dating?

## **Q: What is Product Dating?**

**A:** There are two main types of product dating, “open dating” and “closed dating”. Open Dating uses a calendar date as opposed to a code on a food product. Common examples include “Sell by”, “Best if used by” and “Use by.” Open dating is not a safety date. It is commonly found on perishable foods such as meat, poultry, eggs and dairy products. Occasionally, canned goods and boxed goods will display an “open” or calendar date. These are “best if used by” dates for peak quality. These are the manufacturer’s recommendations for maximum freshness and nutrient value, not safety dates. Closed Dating or Coded dating generally refers to a manufacturer’s code stamped on the product. These codes typically appear on shelf stable products such as canned and boxed foods. Some manufacturers stamp the date the product was manufactured or packaged. Some use a product code that is not able to be deciphered. Essentially food manufacturers use no standardized dating codes on products.

*(US & PA Department of Agriculture)*

## **Q: Are Retailers Allowed to Sell Products Beyond the Date on the Package?**

**A:** Yes, as long as a product is wholesome, a retailer may legally sell grocery items including fresh or processed meat and poultry products beyond the date on the package.

*(Adapted from Food Marketing Institute information)  
(Exceptions to this would include baby food, fluid milk)*

## **Q: What is a Product’s Shelf Life?**

**A:** This varies depending on the type of product. Many processed and packaged foods are shelf stable, which means that they do not require refrigeration until opened. These items are often referred to as non-perishable for these reasons. Their shelf life is evaluated in terms of the quality of the product. Food quality deals with taste, texture, color and nutritional value. Since the storage time for shelf stable foods is a quality issue and not a food safety concern, the FDA does not require an expiration date.

*(Adapted from National Food Processors Association information & FDA Food Safety)*

## **Q: Is Dating Required by Federal Law?**

**A:** Except for infant formula and some baby food, product dating is NOT required by Federal regulations.

*(US Dept. Of Agriculture)*

# Product Dating?

For More Information On Food Safety

## **Q: How Long Does Canned Food Remain Edible and Retain Its Nutritional Content?**

**A:** Canned food has a shelf life of at least two years from the date of processing. Canned food retains its safety and nutritional value well beyond two years, but it may have some variation in quality, such as a change of color or texture. Canning is a high-heat process that renders the food commercially sterile. Food safety is not an issue in products kept on the shelf in moderate temperatures (75 degrees Fahrenheit and below). The acid content of the food and the lining of the can are important factors in a product's quality and appearance after long periods of storage.

*(Adapted from [mealttime.org](http://mealttime.org), Canned Food Alliance and The National Food Processors Association)*

## **Q: What Do Can Codes Mean?**

**A:** Cans must exhibit a packing code to enable tracking of the product in interstate commerce. This enables manufacturers to rotate their stock as well as to locate their products in the event of a recall. These codes, which appear as a series of letters and/or numbers, might refer to the date or time of manufacture. They aren't meant for the consumer to interpret as "use-by" dates. There is no book which tells how to translate the codes into dates.

*(U.S. Department of Agriculture)*

## **Q: What About Frozen Foods?**

**A:** Once a perishable product is frozen at proper temperatures, it does not matter if the date expires because food kept frozen continuously is safe indefinitely. Sharp Shopper freezes perishable items before the date on the package which extends the life. Packaging is important to the quality and appearance of frozen foods. Products exposed to air can develop "freezer burn" which does not affect the safety of the product, but can impact taste and quality.

*(Adapted information from PA Dept. Of Agriculture and American Frozen Food Institute)*



[www.foodsafety.gov](http://www.foodsafety.gov)

Gateway to Government Food Safety Information

**1-888-674-6854**

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Taped messages on food safety.

[www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov)

U.S. Food and Drug Administration

[www.mealttime.org](http://www.mealttime.org)

The Canned Food Alliance - various food information.

[www.gmaonline.org](http://www.gmaonline.org)

Grocery Manufacturers Association - various information including food safety by the Association of Food, Beverage and Consumer Products Companies.

[www.agriculture.state.pa.us](http://www.agriculture.state.pa.us)

PA Department of Agriculture - various industry information, products, recalls and food safety information.

[www.affi.com](http://www.affi.com)

American Frozen Food Institute - various frozen food industry information.

[www.nrdc.org/food/expiration-dates.asp](http://www.nrdc.org/food/expiration-dates.asp)

National Resources Defense Council

[www.sharppopper.net](http://www.sharppopper.net)