



Food Terminology Chart

Compiled by Jamie Novak

- **Best if used by and use-by date:** With emphasis on the *best* qualifier in this term, it means the product should retain maximum freshness, flavor and texture if used by this date. It is not a purchase-by or safety date. Beyond this date, the product begins to deteriorate, although it may still be edible.
- **Expiration date:** If you haven't used the product by this date, toss it out. Other dating terms are used as a basic guideline, but this one means what it says.
- **Sell-by or pull-by date:** This date is used by manufacturers to tell grocers when to remove their product from the shelves, but there is generally still some leeway for home usage. For example, milk often has a sell-by date, but the milk will usually still be good for at least a week beyond that date if properly refrigerated.
- **Guaranteed fresh:** This date is often used for perishable baked goods. Beyond this date, freshness is no longer guaranteed although it may still be edible.
- **Pack date:** This is the date the item was packed, most-used on canned and boxed goods. It is usually in the form of an encrypted code not easy to decipher. It may be coded by month (M), day (D), and year (Y), such as YYMMDD or MMDDYY. Or it may be coded using Julian (JJJ) numbers, where January 1 would be 001 and December 31 would be 365. In even more convoluted coding, letters A through M (omitting the letter I) are often assigned to the months, with A being January and M being December, plus a numeric day, either preceded or followed by the numeric year.

Food storage tips & hints

- Once opened, many of the dates become obsolete since the contents now become perishable. It is advisable to use products as quickly as possible after opening.
- Take a tip from grocers and rotate your stock at home. Rather than trying to decipher cryptic codes on cans, use a marker to write the purchase date on cans and packaged foods to help you judge the age.

Pantry

- Glass jars out of direct light to avoid chemical reactions
- Use canned items within 6 months
- Baking mixes contain dehydrated fats that can become rancid with time