

PRODUCT SHELF LIFE GUIDE

Great Plains Food Bank often distributes food products that are donated when they have reached their “sell by” date. Most foods are safe to eat past the date printed on the package. Pantries can use this guide based on well-established food safety principles. **Dates listed are based off the manufactures code date or the expiration date on packages for unopened product.**

- **Refrigerated food:** must be stored at or below 40 degrees F.
- **Frozen food:** must be stored at or below 0 degrees F.
- **Shelf stable food:** must be stored at 70 degrees F in a dry area.



PRODUCT	REFRIGERATED SHELF LIFE AFTER CODE DATE	FROZEN SHELF LIFE AFTER CODE DATE
FRUITS & VEGETABLES		
Fruit juice	3 weeks	8-12 months
Fruit, fresh, cut	2 days	Do not freeze
Salad greens	3-5 days	Do not freeze
DAIRY PRODUCTS		
Butter	1-3 months	6-9 months
Cheese	1 month	3-4 months
Egg, hard boiled	1 week	Do not freeze
Egg, in shell	3 weeks	Do not freeze
Ice cream	Do not thaw	2-4 months
Milk	1 week	3 months
Sour cream	7-21 days	Do not freeze
Yogurt	7-14 days	1-2 months
SOY PRODUCTS		
Soy milk	7-10 days	Do not freeze
Soy yogurt	By expiration date	Do not freeze
FISH		
Fatty fish (salmon, mackerel, perch)	5-7 days cooked	3-6 months
Lean fish (cod, flounder, haddock)	5-7 days cooked	1 year
Shrimp and other shellfish	5-7 days cooked	3-6 months
MEAT/POULTRY		
Bacon	1 week	1 month
Hot Dogs	2 weeks	1-2 months
Luncheon meat, commercial package	2 weeks	Do not freeze
Beef, Lamb, Pork, Roasts	3-5 days cooked	4-12 months
Chicken	1-2 days cooked	1-3 months
Ground meat	1-2 days cooked	3-4 months
Sausage	1 week	9 months
DELI PRODUCTS		
Luncheon meat, deli sliced	3-5 days	1-2 months
Prepared salads (potato, egg, pasta)	3-4 days	Do not freeze
Prepared salads (vegetable)	3 days	Do not freeze
Sandwiches	2 days	Do not freeze

SHELF STABLE FOODS	SHELF LIFE AFTER CODE DATE
CANNED FOODS	
Beans	3 years
Fish	3 years
Fruit	1-2 years
Gravy, Stews, Soup	2-5 years
Low acid vegetables (carrots, corn, peas, potatoes, spinach)	2-5 years
Meat	2-3 years
Pie filling	3 years
Tomato, soup/sauce	1 year
CONDIMENTS, SAUCES, SYRUPS, OILS	
BBQ sauce	1 year
Frosting	10 months
Honey	2 years
Jam, jelly, preserves	18 months
Ketchup	18 months
Mustard	2 years
Oil (veg, olive, cooking)	6-12 months
Pasta sauce	18 months
Peanut butter	6 months
Salad dressing	1 year
Salsa	1 year
Shortening	8 months
Syrup (chocolate, corn, pancake)	1 year
BABY/INFANT FOOD	
Baby food	By expiration date
Cereal, dry mixes	By expiration date
Infant formula	By expiration date

SHELF STABLE FOODS	SHELF LIFE AFTER CODE DATE
GRAINS/BREADS	
Baked goods (bread, bagels, pastries, rolls)*	2 days
Baking mix (pancake, brownie, muffin)*	9-18 months
Flour, all purpose*	1 year
Flour, whole wheat*	6 months
Oatmeal*	12 months
Pasta, dry	2 years
Popcorn, kernels	2 years
Popcorn, microwave	1 year
Rice	1 year
Tortillas*	3 months
BEVERAGES	
Coffee*	2 years
Juice	6 months
Milk, evaporated	1 year
Powered drink mix*	3 years
Soymilk, shelf stable	6 months
Tea	2 years
MISCELLANEOUS	
Beans/lentils, dried	2 years
Bouillon	2 years
Crackers/cereal	1 year
Spices, ground*	3 years
Spices, whole*	4 years
Sugar, brown	6 months
Sugar (white, powdered)	18 months
Nuts/seeds*	6-12 months
Over-the-counter drugs	By expiration date

Any signs of damage or deterioration supersede these guidelines.

- Do **NOT** distribute baby food, cereal, formula or over-the-counter drugs after the expiration date.
- **Discard** products that have broken seals, off odor, color or taste, severely freezer burned, opened, rusted or leaking.
- **Never** accept raw, thawed meat or seafood donations.
- **When in doubt, throw it out!**
- *Grains, beverages, nuts and spices will have an extended shelf life if kept frozen. Freeze for up to 3 months to preserve freshness.

For a complete list of foods, visit the FoodKeeper website at <https://www.foodsafety.gov> or download the FoodKeeper mobile application available for Android and Apple devices. FoodKeeper was developed by USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service, with Cornell University and the Food Marketing Institute.