

# FOODSHARE

## Food Date Labeling and Product Distribution Guidelines

### Federal, State and Local Laws

**Federal Law:** There are no federal laws regulating or requiring food dates. The only exception to this is **infant formula** which is required to be labeled with an “expiration date”.

***Foodshare Policy: To insure the full nutritional value of infant formula is retained Foodshare does not distribute infant formula past the expiration date.***

**Connecticut State Law:** Connecticut requires a “sell by date” on dairy products only. This date is not intended to reflect the quality of the product so dairy products can be donated and distributed after their “sell by date”.

***Foodshare Policy: Foodshare distributes dairy products after the “sell by date” and allows the consumer to use their sense of taste and smell to determine the quality of the product.***

**Local Departments of Health:** Local health departments may have their own guidelines about what products can be distributed in your town to your clients.

***Foodshare Policy: Foodshare may distribute products that your local health department will not allow your program to distribute.***

A Summary of Federal and Connecticut Laws regulating Date Labels can be found here: [Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic Legal Fact Sheet for Connecticut.](#)

Below are generally accepted guidelines for how long after the code date you should expect unopened product to retain its quality and taste.

## Dairy:

	<b><u>Refrigerated</u> Shelf Life after Code Date</b>	<b><u>Frozen</u> Shelf Life after Code Date</b>
<b>Butter</b>	3 months	1 year
<b>Buttermilk</b>	2 weeks	Not recommended
<b>Cheese</b>		
Hard and Semi-Hard	6 months	6 months
Soft cheese (brie, spreads, cottage)	2 weeks	Not recommended
Cottage Cheese	2 months	3 months
Cream cheese	2 months	Not recommended
<b>Cream</b>	10 days	4 months
<b>Eggs</b>	4 weeks	Not recommended
<b>Eggbeaters/whites</b>	2 wees	1 year
<b>Juice</b>	2 weeks	1 year
<b>Margarine</b>	6 months	1 year
<b>Milk</b>	1 week	Not recommended
<b>Sour cream</b>	3 weeks	Not recommended
<b>Yogurt</b>	2 weeks	2 months

### **Extending the Shelf Life of Milk:**

- Skim and non-fat milks tend to last a few days longer than regular because some bacteria will develop more slowly in them.
- Keeping milk cold is critical to maximizing its shelf life.
- Store milk on an interior refrigerator shelf rather than in the door, where the temperature fluctuates with frequent opening.

## Meat:

When raw meat has been kept frozen, it will be safe to eat indefinitely. The quality may deteriorate with time, the first symptom being freezer burn.

# Frozen:

## Frozen Prepared Meals

Frozen Prepared Meals that were safe to eat when frozen, remain safe indefinitely when frozen. Most usually retain their taste and quality for 6-18 months beyond code date.

# Shelf Stable: (Cans, Bottles, Jars, Boxes)

Shelf stable foods may begin to deteriorate in quality and taste after the code date, especially once opened. However, shelf stable food remains safe indefinitely.

## Sources

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