


FOOD CONSUMPTIONtimetable



In Canada, only 5 foods have an expiry date - meal replacements,nutritional suppliments, infant formula, liquid diets and physician prescribed low-energy diets. All other foods display a best before date. Best before dates are an indicator of food quality, not food safety, meaning that food can be consumed past the best before date. This confusion continues to be a major source of avoidable food waste in Canada. This guide helps you clarify when food can be consumed past the best before date.

Always use your senses to evaluate food quality if food is past the best before date. Food must be stored properly and unopened for the recommendations below to apply.

BB = Best Before Date

FOOD CATEGORY	ITEMS	CONSUME BY
PRODUCE 	Perishable fresh fruits and vegetables	No visible rot, mold, or bio-degrading smell
	Shelf stable canned fruits and vegetables, pickles, sauces, or pastes	1 year past BB
DAIRY 	Perishable milk (including dairy alternatives), butter, yogurt, cheese, eggs, ice cream, sour cream	2 weeks past BB IF FROZEN 2-3 months past BB
	Shelf stable evaporated, powdered, or milk alternatives	1 year past BB
	Shelf stable baby formula, supplemental beverages (i.e.: Ensure)	Expiry date
MEAT & FISH / EGGS & SOY / LEGUMES / NUT PRODUCTS & NUTS 	Raw meat and fish	BB or IF FROZEN: Beef, lamb, pork, whole poultry: 1 year past BB Poultry pieces: 6 months past BB Ground meat: 2-3 months past BB Fish: 2-6 months past BB
	Cooked luncheon meats, tofu, eggs	1 week past BB
	Shelf stable canned meat, fish, beans, chickpeas, nuts, nut butter, peanut butter, seeds, spam	1 year past BB
BREAD / CRACKERS & CEREAL / GRAIN 	Perishable bread, buns, bagels, pitas, tortillas, flat bread, na'an, matzah	No visible rot, mold, or bio-degrading smell
	Dry, shelf stable cereal, crackers, flour, oats, pasta, rice, quinoa, meals or sides, energy bars	1 year past BB
	Meal replacement or supplement bars	Expiry date
BAKED GOODS / SNACKS / DESSERTS 	Perishable cakes, cookies, pies, danishes, chocolate, pudding	72 hours past BB IF FROZEN 1 month past BB
	Shelf stable cookies, chips, popcorn, bagged snacks, snack cakes, granola bars	1 year past BB
PREPARED 	Pre-cooked or ready-to-eat meals; deli salads, pizza, sandwiches	72 hours past BB IF FROZEN 1 month past BB
	Frozen dinners, microwavable meals	1 year past BB
	Shelf stable canned soups, stews, meals	1 year past BB
	Shelf stable baby food	1 year past BB
CONDIMENTS 	Frozen sauces, gravies	3 months past BB
	Shelf stable mustard, relish, ketchup, jam, margarine, mayonnaise, oil, salad dressing, vinegars, spices, sauces, toppings	1 year past BB
BEVERAGES 	Juice, water, coconut water	3-6 months past BB
	Other drinks; coffee, tea, sport or energy drinks, crystals	3-6 months past BB