

## **SHELF LIFE REFERENCE GUIDE**

This quick reference guide is intended to provide estimated shelf life for products typically available at the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan. The guidelines stated for refrigerated and frozen products assume temperature control at <40°F and <-10°F respectively. Dry products are expected to be held under dry conditions, protected from temperature extremes of cold and heat.

<b>Product</b>	<b>Estimated Shelf Life PAST CODE</b>	<b>Discard if...</b>
<b>Baby Food or Formula (Jars)</b>	Do not use beyond code.	Popped safety seal Cracks Leaking Past code
<b>Baby Formula (Cans)</b>	Do not use beyond code.	Leaking Past code
<b>Baby Juice (Jars or Cans)</b>	Do not use beyond code.	Popped safety seal Cracks Leaking Past code
<b>Bread/Bakery Products</b>	3-10 days	Any visible package defect Mold
<b>Canned Goods</b>	1-2 years	Bulging Leaking Severe seam dents Missing label Severe rust
<b>Asceptic Containers</b>	1-2 years	Any visible package defect Leaking
<b>Jars/Bottles</b>	6 months-1 year	Popped safety seal Filth under rim of lid Missing label Dented lid
<b>Cereal</b>	3 months	Any visible package defect Stains on box
<b>Crackers</b>	3 months	Any visible package defect Stains on box
<b>Dried Beans</b>	1-2 years	Any visible package defect Mold
<b>Freezer Products</b>	3 months-1 year	Any visible package defects Freezer burn Off odor Evidence of thaw/re-freezing
<b>Pasta</b>	1 year	Any visible package defect Mold
<b>Prepared Salads/Dips</b>	Do not use beyond code.	Past code
<b>Refrigerated Juices/Teas</b>	1-4 weeks	Any visible package defect Mold Off odor/taste
<b>Rice</b>	1 year	Any visible package defect Mold
<b>Yogurt</b>	1-3 weeks	Any visible package defect Mold Off odor/taste

*This document was adapted from a guide designed by the Alameda County Community Food Bank.*

# IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR FOOD

All cans that go through the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan are inspected for damage. You have the opportunity to inspect the cans you receive as well. Look for these problems:



## DENTS

- Severe dents on the side seam.
- Sharp dents that are parallel to the rim of the can.
- Sharp dents in the side of the can that prevent it from being stacked.
- Buckled or pinched tops and/or bottoms.
- Leaks from side seam, rim seam, or punctures.
- Bulges or puffed tops and/or bottoms.
- Ends that give or flip and bulge when pushed with a finger.
- Severe crease dents on the rim or on a side seam.

Minor dents to the sides or tops of cans do not harm the food inside the can. Stores donate these products because they are not pleasing to the eye of the shopper who will pay top dollar only for a perfect product.

**“Sell-by date”** - tells a store how long to display the product for sale. This is not necessarily a safety date.

**“Best if used by”** (or “before”) - recommended for best flavor or quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.

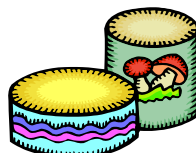
**“Use-by”** - the last date recommended for use of the product while at peak quality. The manufacturer of the product has determined the date.

**“Closed or Coded”** dates—packing numbers for use by the manufacturer in tracking their products. This enables manufacturers to rotate their stock as well as locate their products in the event of a recall.



## DATES

**Low-Acid Canned Goods**  
2-5 years  
(canned meats, stews, soups except tomato, pasta products, corn, potatoes, beans, peas, beets)



## STORAGE

**High-Acid Canned Goods**  
12-18 months  
(tomato products, fruits, sauerkraut, and foods in vinegar-based sauces or dressings)

*This information was compiled by the American Red Cross Regional Food Distribution Center.*