



Reduce Food Waste: Know the Dates and Canned Food Safety

**Learn the difference between:
Best Buy, Sell By, Best Before, Use By
& Expiration Dates.**

Learn about Canned Food Safety.

**By understanding these distinctions, you
can better manage your food
consumption and reduce waste while
ensuring safety.**



**ARIZONA'S
FAMILY TO THE
HOMELESS**

Best By Dates

Quality Indicator: Focus on maintaining the product's peak quality.

Product Freshness: Ensures optimal taste, texture, and flavor.

Safe to Consume: Generally safe to eat after the date, but quality may decline.

Trust Your Senses: Use appearance, smell, and taste to judge if it's still good.

Common Products: Canned goods, frozen foods, dry goods, and packaged snacks.

Expiration Dates

Safety Indicator: Ensures the product is safe to consume.

Critical Threshold: Higher risk of foodborne illness after this date.

Discard After Expiration: Even if it looks and smells fine, it's best to discard.

Perishable Products: Dairy, meat, poultry, and seafood.

Storage Matters: Proper storage can extend shelf life, but always adhere to expiration dates.

Best Buy Dates: Best Buy dates, also known as "Sell By" or "Best Before" dates, are indicators provided by manufacturers to suggest the timeframe during which a product is at its peak quality. These dates are primarily intended for retailers and are used to help ensure that consumers purchase products that offer the best sensory experience.

Key Points about Best Buy Dates:

Quality Indicator: Best Buy dates are primarily about maintaining the product's quality rather than its safety.

Product Freshness: Consuming the product before the Best Buy date ensures optimal taste, texture, and flavor.

Safe to Consume: Consuming the product after the Best Buy date does not necessarily mean it is unsafe, but the quality may start to deteriorate.

Trust Your Senses: Before consuming a product past its Best Buy date, use your senses to evaluate its appearance, smell, and taste. If it appears spoiled or has an off smell or taste, it's best to discard it.

Best Buy dates are typically found on products such as canned goods, frozen foods, dry goods, and packaged snacks.

Expiration Dates: Expiration dates, also known as "Use By" dates, provide guidance on the last recommended date for consuming a product while ensuring both quality and safety. These dates are determined by manufacturers based on factors such as the product's ingredients, formulation, and anticipated shelf life.

Key Points about Expiration Dates:

Safety Indicator: Expiration dates are designed to ensure consumer safety by indicating when a product may no longer be safe to consume.

Critical Threshold: Consuming a product after the expiration date poses a greater risk of foodborne illness due to potential bacterial growth or spoilage.

Discard after Expiration: It's advisable to discard products after their expiration date, even if they appear and smell fine.

Perishable Products: Expiration dates are typically found on perishable items like dairy products, meat, poultry, and seafood.

Storage Matters: Proper storage and handling practices can help extend the shelf life of a product, but it is still important to adhere to expiration dates.

Understanding the distinction between Best Buy dates and Expiration dates empowers consumers to make informed choices regarding the quality and safety of food products. While Best Buy dates primarily focus on maintaining optimal quality, Expiration dates are crucial for ensuring food safety.

Safety Concerns with Dented Cans

Small Dents: Generally, food in cans with small dents is safe to eat, as long as the dent is not on the seam or rim.

Deep or Sharp Dents: Cans with deep dents (ones you can lay your finger into) or sharp dents on the seams should be discarded. These can compromise the can's integrity and allow bacteria to enter.

Signs of Spoilage: If a can is leaking, bulging, or has rust, it should be thrown away. Additionally, if the can spurts liquid or foam when opened, or if the contents are discolored or have an off smell, it's best to discard it.

Botulism Risk

Botulism: One of the main risks with dented cans is botulism, a rare but serious illness caused by a toxin produced by the bacteria *Clostridium botulinum*. Symptoms include difficulty speaking or swallowing, facial weakness, and paralysis.

Prevention: To avoid botulism, inspect cans carefully. If in doubt, it's safer to discard the can.

General Advice

When in Doubt, Throw It Out: This is a good rule of thumb for any questionable food item.

Proper Storage: Store cans in a cool, dry place to prevent rust and damage.

By following these guidelines, you can help ensure the safety of your canned foods.



ARIZONA'S
FAMILY TO THE
HOMELESS