

Food Dating Terminology

OPEN DATING gives an actual date instead of a code. It is used mainly on perishable foods such as meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products. It helps the store know when to pull these foods from shelves. It also can help consumers purchase a food at its best quality.

CLOSED or CODED DATING may appear on more shelf-stable foods, such as cans and boxes.

OPEN DATING

There are three types of open dating in which an actual calendar date is displayed.

1. **USE-BY DATE:** This is the last date recommended for the use of the product while at peak quality.

WHAT TO DO: The best policy is to use the product by this date.

2. **SELL-BY DATE:** This date tells the store how long to display the product for sale. You should buy the product before the date expires.

WHAT TO DO: It depends on the food as to how long the food is safe to eat and/or maintains a high quality after this date.

NOTE: Once a food is opened, it frequently needs to be used more quickly than it would if it remained unopened.

3. **BEST IF USED BY (OR BEFORE) DATE:** This date is recommended for best flavor or quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.

Adapted from University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension <http://lancaster.unl.edu/food/>

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