

Inventory Management & Food Storage Guide Lines



The following guidelines will help you maintain the quality and safety of your food supply.

- All foods must be stored so they are protected from spoilage, pest infestation, damage, or other conditions that may harm the wholesomeness or safety of the foods.
- Foods must be stored in sanitary conditions, at the proper temperature and humidity, as well as with adequate air circulation. Proper storage practices and effective inventory management is necessary to ensure that foods are distributed in a timely manner, and in optimal condition.
- Use a First-In-First-Out “**FIFO**” system of inventory management. Mark food cases or other containers with the date you receive it. Be aware of dates placed on food products by the manufacturers because that helps determine how long food products can be expected to remain in optimal condition. These product dates must be considered along with “FIFO” in managing food inventories.



Since different product dates have different meanings, you need to know which product date is used and understand what it means. **It is important to understand that, except for expiration dates, product dates do not necessarily indicate when foods are no longer safe to consume.**

Expiration and Use-By Dates

Generally, “**expiration**” dates and “**use-by**” dates are the last dates that the manufacturer recommends a food item be

consumed to insure peak quality and nutrient retention. **However, there is no regulation requiring that manufacturers mark their products with such dates.** Inventories must be managed to ensure that all foods can be consumed before their expiration dates or use-by dated have passed.

Best-If-Used-By Dates



A “**best-if-used-by**” date is the last date a food item will be at its peak, in terms of flavor and quality. At some point after that, there can be changes in taste, color, texture, and/or nutrient content. **However, the product may be wholesome and safe to consume, and retain most of its nutrient value, long after the “best-if-used-by” date.** You must consider “best-if-used by” dates in managing food inventories, and utilize the foods in a manner that allows them to be consumed by such date.

Pack Dates

A “**pack date**” indicates when the product was packaged or processed. **While it may help to determine the age of the product, it does not necessarily provide useful information on its wholesomeness or nutritional value.**

When in doubt, throw it out! Foods that show signs of spoilage, infestation, or other harmful defects should not be used regardless of when they were received. If you have any questions regarding the wholesomeness or safety of any food received from the food bank, please contact Toni Clark immediately at 518-786-3691 x225.

Resource: Adapted from the July 2, 2010 Memo from the NYS Office of General Service Division of Food Distribution and & Warehousing Re: Storage and Inventory Management of USDA Foods.