

SHELF LIFE

INTRODUCTION

1. Shelf life is the length of time that a commodity may be stored without becoming unfit for use or consumption. It applies to foods, beverages, pharmaceutical drugs, chemicals, and many other perishable items. In some regions, an advisory best before, mandatory use by, or freshness date is required on packaged perishable foods.
2. Shelf life is the recommended maximum time for which products or fresh (harvested) produce can be stored, during which the defined quality of a specified proportion of the goods remains acceptable under expected (or specified) conditions of distribution, storage and display.
3. Most expiry dates are used as guidelines based on normal and expected handling and exposure to temperature. Use prior to the expiration date does not guarantee the safety of a food, and a product is not necessarily dangerous or ineffective after the expiration date.
4. For food, shelf life is different from expiration date: the former refers to food quality, the latter to food safety. A product that has passed its shelf life might still be safe, but quality is no longer guaranteed. In catering facilities, waste is minimized by using stock rotation, which involves moving products with the earliest sell by date to the front, so that most cooks will pick them up first and thus they are likely to be used before the end of their shelf life. This is important, as crew enjoy fresher goods, and furthermore vessels can be fined for using out of date products; most cooks if not all would have to mark such products down as wasted, resulting in a financial loss.
5. Shelf life depends on the degradation mechanism of the specific product. Most can be influenced by several factors: exposure to light, heat, moisture, transmission of gases, mechanical stresses, and contamination by things such as micro-organisms. Product quality is often mathematically modelled around a parameter (concentration of a chemical compound, a microbiological index, or moisture content).
6. For some foods, health issues are important in determining shelf life. Bacterial contaminants are ubiquitous, and foods left unused too long will often be contaminated by substantial amounts of bacterial colonies and become dangerous to eat, leading to food poisoning. However, shelf life alone is not an accurate indicator of how long the food can safely be stored. For example, pasteurized milk can remain fresh for five days after its sell-by date if it is refrigerated properly. In contrast, if milk already has harmful bacteria, the use-by dates become irrelevant.

Best before date

A tag sealing a bag of hot dog buns displays a best before date of 29th February.



7. Best before or best by dates appear on a wide range of frozen, dried, tinned and other foods. These dates are only advisory and refer to the quality of the product, in contrast with use by dates, which indicate that the product may no longer be safe to consume after the specified date. Food kept after the best before date will not necessarily be harmful, but may begin to lose its optimum flavour and texture. Eggs are a special case, since they may contain salmonella which multiplies over time; they should therefore be eaten before the best before date, which is, in the USA, a maximum of 45 days after the eggs are packed.

8. Sometimes the packaging process involves using pre-printed labels, making it impractical to write the best before date in a clearly visible location. In this case, wording like best before see bottom or best before see lid might be printed on the label and the date marked in a different location as indicated.

Use by date

A foil milk bottle top from the UK displays a use by date of 26th December pressed into the foil.



9. Generally, foods that have a use by date written on the packaging must not be eaten after the specified date. This is because such foods usually go bad quickly and may be injurious to health if spoiled. It is also important to follow storage instructions carefully for these foods (for example, if they specify that the product must be refrigerated).

10. Foods with a best before date are usually safe to eat for a time after that date, although they are likely to have deteriorated either in flavour, texture, appearance or nutritional value.

Sell By/Display Until

11. These dates are intended to help keep track of the stock in supplier's stores. Food that has passed its sell by or display until date, but has not yet reached its use by / best before date will still be edible, assuming it has been stored correctly. It is common practice in large stores to throw away such food, as it makes the stock control process easier; another common practice is for suppliers to repurchase the expired product and resell it to discount stores at much lower clearance sale prices. These practices reduce the risk of customers unknowingly buying food without looking at the date, only to find out the next day that they cannot use it. Tampering with the posted date is illegal in many countries.

Regulations in Canada

A best before date used on the bottom of a box in Canada



12. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency produces a Guide to Food Labelling and Advertising which sets out a “Durable Life Date”. The authority for producing the guide comes from the Food and Drugs Act. The guide sets out what items must be labelled and the format of the date. The month and day must be included and the year if it is felt necessary and must be in the format year/month/day. However, there is no requirement that the year be in four digits.

Regulations in the UK

13. In the UK regulations are governed by Directive 2000/13/EC and according to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs must be in the day/month or day/month/year format.

Regulation in the US

14. Sale of expired food products, per se, is lightly regulated in the US. Some states (like New York) bar such sale, and/or require expiration dates on all foods, but many (like California) do not. However, sale of contaminated food is generally illegal, resulting in product liability.

BREADS	Room Temperature (70°F)	Refrigerator (37° to 40° F)	Freezer (0°F)	Comments
Breads, fresh	Store at room temperature. Use the date as a guide or use within 3 to 5 days.	Storing in the refrigerator promotes staling.	3 months	Over wrap well to prevent drying out; thaw at room temperature
Bread and rolls, unbaked dough		2 to 3 days	2 months	Sometimes dough doesn't rise as well if frozen
Bread Crumbs and Croutons	6 months			
Muffins, rolls, quick breads		3 days	1 to 2 months	Wrap individually, pick in rigid containers to prevent crushing
Pancakes and waffles		2 days	1 month	Freeze with waxed paper between each two. Heat without thawing in a toaster or under broiler
Pastries, Danish, Doughnuts		Store at room temperature. Best used within 1 to 3 days	3 months	
Tortillas, corn or flour		1 week	3 months	Wrap well
Tube cans of rolls, biscuits, pizza dough, etc.		Use-by-date	Don't freeze	
Ready-to-bake pie crust		Use-by-date	2 months	
Cookie dough		Use-by-date unopened or opened	2 months	
BAKED GOODS CAKES				
Angel food & sponge cakes		3 days	4 to 6 months	Wrap well
Cheesecake		3 to 7 days	4 to 6 months	Wrap well
Fruit cakes			1 year	Wrap well
Layer cakes		Store at room temperature. Best used within 3 to 7 days	2 to 4 months	Wrap well. Butter frosting freezes well, fluffy egg white frostings don't
COOKIES				
Cookies, home-made and baked	2 to 3 weeks		4 to 6 months	Pack in airtight container
Cookies, store bought and packaged		2 to 3 days	4 to 6 months	
Cookies, unbaked dough		2 to 3 days	6 months	Form refrigerator dough cookies in rolls; wrap tightly, thaw in refrigerator before slicing or dropping on cookie sheets

PIES	Room Temperature (70°F)	Refrigerator (37° to 40° F)	Freezer (0°F)	Comments
Chiffon pie, Pumpkin pie		2 to 3 days	1 month	
Cream and Custard Pies		2 to 3 days	6 months	
Fruit pies, baked		2 to 3 days	6 to 8 months	Wrap well; thaw at room temperature; heat in 350 degree F. oven about 15 minutes
Fruit pies, unbaked			8 months	Cut holes in upper crust to vent; bake unthawed
Pies, starch-thickened custard		1 to 2 days	Do not freeze	Fillings become watery and lumpy and pastry becomes soggy
Pies, nut, baked		4 to 5 days	6 months	Wrap well
Pie shells, unbaked		1 day	2 months	Fit in pie pans; prick crusts. Stack pie pans with 2 layers freezer paper between. Place in freezer bags. Either bake frozen or thaw in refrigerator
Quiche		2 to 3 days	6 months	
DAIRY PRODUCTS				
Butter		1 to 3 months, unopened 2 to 3 weeks, opened	9 months	Leave in original wrapping; overwrap well
Margarine, Spread substitutes		4 to 5 months, unopened 1 month, opened	1 year	
Cheese, Hard (such as Cheddar, Swiss)		6 months, unopened	6 months	It is recommended that you do not freeze cheese! Freezing destroys the character of the cheese If you do freeze, the cheese is best used in cooking; will crumble when sliced; thaw in refrigerator to minimize crumbling. Repackage in freezer bags
Cheese, parmesan, grated		3 to 4 weeks, opened 1 week	1 to 2 months 6 months	
Cheese Soft (such as Brie, camembert)				
Cottage Cheese, Ricotta Cheese		1 week, opened 45 to 60 day, unopened	Does not freeze well	Separates, becomes grainy
Cream Cheese	Never expose cream cheese to room temperature for more than 2 hours or 1 hour at 90° F or higher.	2 weeks	Does not freeze well	Can be mixed with other ingredients and frozen; by itself becomes crumbly.
Cream-Whipped, ultra-pasteurized				Freeze small mounds of lightly sweetened whipped cream on cookie sheet; then repackage so the mounds won't be crushed; thaw in refrigerator or serve frozen. Texture changes
Cream-Whipped, Sweetened		1 month	Does not freeze	
Cream-Aerosol can, real whipped cream		1 day 3 to 4 weeks	1 to 2 months Does not freeze	
Cream-Aerosol can, non dairy topping		3 months 3 to 4 days	Does not freeze 4 months	
Cream, Half and Half				

DAIRY CONT.	Room Temperature (70°F)	Refrigerator (37° to 40° F)	Freezer (0°F)	Comments
Eggnog, commercial		3 to 5 days	6 months	
Ice Creams, Sorbets		Can't Refrigerate	1 to 2 months	Overwrap to prevent ice crystals, freezer burn
Milk: Whole, Reduced & Low Fat, & Fat Free		7 days		
Milk Substitutes: Soy, Rice, and Almond		85 days, unopened 7 to 10 days, opened		
Buttermilk, fresh Buttermilk, powdered	3 to 5 years	2 weeks	1 month	Allow room for expansion in freezer container; thaw in refrigerator. Freezing affects flavour and appearance; use in cooking and baking.
Condensed Milk, canned	12 to 23 months, unopened	8 to 20 days, opened	3 months	
Dry/Powdered Milk	12 to 23 months, unopened	8 to 20 days, opened		
Evaporated Milk, canned	12 to 23 months, unopened	8 to 20 days, opened		
Pudding	Package date	2 days after opening	Does not freeze	Can separate
Sour cream		7 to 21 days	Does not freeze	Separates when thawed
Yogurt		7 to 14 days	1 to 2 months	Texture changes
EGGS				
Fresh, in shell		3 to 5 weeks	Do not freeze	Shells break; eggs lose quality
Raw whites		2 to 4 days	1 year	Gently stir whites together; freeze in ice cube trays; remove blocks to plastic freezer bag when solid. Each contains about 2 tablespoons. 1 cube - 1 egg white.
Raw yolks		1 week	Do not freeze well	Yolks can clump
Hard cooked eggs		1 week	Do not freeze well	Whites become rubbery; water separates
Liquid pasteurized eggs, egg substitutes		3 days, opened 10 days, unopened	Does not freeze well	If opened, read label instructions regarding freezing. Freeze if unopened.
Mayonnaise, commercial, refrigerate after opening	2 to 3 months, unopened	1 year, unopened 2 months, opened	Doesn't freeze	

FRUITS	Room Temperature (70°F)	Refrigerator (37° to 40° F)	Freezer (0°F)	Comments
Commercially Frozen Fruits			1 year	
Canned Fruits		12 to 24 months, unopened opened - 2 to 3 days		Do not store in opened can. Store in airtight container.
Dried fruits	6 months	3 to 5 days, cooked		Keep cool, in airtight container; if possible, refrigerate
Apples		3 to 5 months		
Apricots, grapes, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums		3 to 5 months	6 months	See preserving instructions for individual fruits
Avocados	2 to 3 days after ripened	5 to 10 days		
Bananas	Store at room temperature			Freeze whole in skin or peel and mash; great in breads and cakes
Berries, cherries		2 to 3 days	Freeze individually on cookie sheets; repackage in heavy plastic bags	
Cranberries		3 to 4 weeks		8 to 12 months
Grapefruit	7 days	2 weeks	4 to 6 months	Wrap cut surfaces to prevent loss of Vitamin C.
Grapes		1 to 2 weeks		
Guavas, papayas		1 to 2 days		
Kiwi Fruit	3 to 5 days after ripening	4 to 6 months if unripe.		
Lemons	1 week	2 to 5 weeks		
Limes	1 week	2 to 5 weeks		
Melons		1 week	8 to 12 months	Wrap cut surfaces to prevent Vitamin C loss, control odour's.
Oranges	3 to 4 days	5 to 6 weeks		
Peaches	Ripen at room temperature	2 to 3 days		
Pineapple	1 to 2 days	3 to 5 days		
Tangerines	2 to 3 days	1 week		
Watermelon	Uncut watermelon can be stored at room temperature for a few days	6 to 8 days		

FRUIT BEVERAGES	Room Temperature (70°F)	Refrigerator (37° to 40° F)	Freezer (0°F)	Comments
Juices in cartons, fruit drinks, punch		3 weeks unopened 7 to 10 days opened	8 to 12 months	
MEATS DELI & VACUUM-PACKED PRODUCTS				
Store-prepared (or homemade) egg, chicken, ham, tuna, macaroni salads		3 to 5 days	Does not freeze well	
HOT DOGS & LUNCHEON MEATS				
Hot dogs, opened package		1 week	1 to 2 months	Changes texture, flavour
unopened package		2 weeks	1 to 2 months	Changes texture, flavour
Luncheon meats, opened package		3 to 5 days	1 to 2 months	These lose flavour quickly; wrap tightly
unopened package		2 weeks	1 to 2 months	These lose flavour quickly; wrap tightly
BACON & SAUSAGE				
Bacon and pancetta		7 days	1 month	Leave unopened in original wrapping; over wrap well
Sausage, fresh; raw from chicken, turkey, pork, beef		1 to 2 days	1 to 2 months	Over wrap packages well
Smoked breakfast links, patties		7 days	1 to 2 months	Over wrap packages well
Hard sausage--pepperoni, jerky sticks		2 to 3 weeks	1 to 2 months	Keep in original packaging; over wrap well
Summer sausage--labelled "Keep Refrigerated" opened		3 weeks	1 to 2 months	
unopened		3 months		
HAM, CORNED BEEF				
Corned beef, in pouch with pickling juices		5 to 7 days	Drained, 1 month	
Ham, canned--labelled "Keep Refrigerated" opened		3 to 5 days	1 to 2 months	
unopened		6 to 9 months	Does not freeze	

HAM, CORNEBEEF CONT.	Room Temperature (70°F)	Refrigerator (37° to 40° F)	Freezer (0°F)	Comments
Ham, fully cooked vacuum sealed at plant, undated, unopened		2 weeks	1 to 2 months	
Ham, fully cooked vacuum sealed at plant, dated, unopened		"use by" date on package	1 to 2 months	
Ham, fully cooked, whole		7 days	1 to 2 months	
Ham, fully cooked, half		3 to 5 days	1 to 2 months	
Ham, fully cooked, 3 to 4 days		3 to 4 days	1 to 2 months	
HAMBURGER, GROUND				
Hamburger, ground beef		1 to 2 days	3 to 4 months	Remove from supermarket wrapping; wrap well in freezer plastic wrap; over wrap with heavy-duty aluminum foil
Ground turkey, veal, pork, lamb & mixtures of them		1 to 2 days	3 to 4 months	Remove from supermarket wrapping; wrap well in freezer plastic wrap; over wrap with heavy-duty aluminum foil
FRESH BEEF, VEAL, LAMB, PORK				
Steaks		3 to 5 days	6 to 12 months	Wrap pieces individually, then over wrap tightly
Chops		3 to 5 days	4 to 6 months	Wrap pieces individually, then over wrap tightly
Roasts		3 to 5 days	4 to 12 months	Wrap pieces individually, then over wrap tightly
Variety meats-tongue, liver, heart, kidneys, chitterlings		1 to 2 days	3 to 4 months	
Pre-stuffed, uncooked pork chops, lamb chops, or chicken breast stuffed with dressing		1 day	Do not freeze well	

SOUPS & STEWS	Room Temperature (70°F)	Refrigerator (37° to 40° F)	Freezer (0°F)	Comments
Chili			4 to 6 months	All-meat chili freeze better than those containing beans, which can break down & become mushy
Soups, broth-based		3 to 4 days	4 months	Freeze in usable amounts or individual servings
Soups, cream-based, such as chowders, bisques		2 days	Do not freeze	Can curdle and separate
Stock		3 to 4 days	4 to 6 months	Freeze in usable amounts
Stews		3 to 4 days	4 to 6 months	Freeze in usable amounts
MEAT LEFTOVERS				
Cooked meat and meat casseroles		3 to 4 days	2 to 3 months	
Gravy and meat broth		1 to 2 days	2 to 3 months	
FRESH POULTRY				
Chicken, turkey, or duck, whole		1 to 2 days	1 year	Keep in original packaging
Chicken or turkey, pieces		1 to 2 days	9 months	Over wrap well
Giblets		1 to 2 days	3 to 4 months	
COOKED POULTRY				
Fried chicken		3 to 4 days	4 months	
Cooked poultry casseroles		3 to 4 days	4 to 6 months	
Pieces, plain		3 to 4 days	4 months	Best frozen in stock, used in soups, casseroles
Pieces covered with broth, gravy		1 to 2 days	6 months	
Chicken nuggets, patties		1 to 2 days	1 to 3 months	
PIZZA				
Pizza		3 to 4 days	1 to 2 months	

STUFFING	Room Temperature (70°F)	Refrigerator (37° to 40° F)	Freezer (0°F)	Comments
Stuffing, cooked		3 to 4 days	1 month	
SEAFOOD & FISH				
Lean fish (cod, flounder, had-dock, sole, etc.)		1 to 2 days	6 months	Remove from light supermarket wrap; wrap well or use ice method below.
Fatty fish (salmon, bluefish, mackerel, salmon, etc.)		1 to 2 days	2 to 3 months	Place on cookie sheet, loosely covered with foil. Freeze. Dip in water several times; freeze to form thin ice glaze; wrap well; over wrap well
Cooked fish		3 to 4 days	4 to 6 months	Texture becomes mushy
Smoked fish		14 days or date on vacuum package	2 months in vacuum package	Vacuum package
SHELLFISH				
Clams, oysters, scallops; live			7 to 10 days	Remove from shells; freeze in their own liquid in airtight plastic freezer bags or containers; raw scallops easily become rubbery
Cooked shellfish		3 to 4 days	3 months	
Crab, cooked		1 to 2 days	2 months	If in shell, leave in shell; dip in water and freeze to form thin ice glaze to prevent drying out and becoming stringy; then repackage
Fish sticks			18 months	
Lobster tail, raw			3 months	Over wrap original wrapping well
Lobster & Crab, live		Same day purchased		
Shrimp, crayfish, squid, shucked clams, & mussels; raw		1 to 2 days	3 to 6 months	Dip in water, freeze, to form ice glaze; place in freezer plastic bags
Shrimp, cooked			Don't freeze	Texture becomes mushy
Shrimp, breaded, commercial				1 year

STAPLES OR PANTRY ITEMS	Room Temperature (70°F)	Refrigerator (37° to 40° F)	Freezer (0°F)	Comments
Baby Food, canned	12 months, unopened 2 days, opened			
Baking Powder	18 months, unopened 6 months, opened			Keep dry and covered.
Baking Soda	2 years, unopened 6 months, opened			Keep dry and covered.
Barbecue Sauce	1 year, unopened	6 months, opened		
Biscuit Mix	12 to 18 months			
Bouillon Cubes or Granules	2 years			
Brownie Mix	9 to 12 months			
Cake mix	9 to 12 months			
Candies		2 to 4 months	6 months	Chocolate-coated varieties may develop white bloom on outside from temperature; thaw in refrigerator
Catsup/Ketchup, Chili Sauce, Cocktail Sauce	12 months, unopened 1 month, opened			Refrigerate for longer storage
Cereals, ready-to-eat	6 to 12 months (opened & unopened)			Refold package liner tightly after opening
Chili Powder	6 months			
Chocolate	semi-sweet, 18 months unsweetened, 18 months			Keep in a cool place
Chocolate Syrup	2 years, unopened	Opened - 6 months		Cover tightly and refrigerate after opening
Cocoa Mixes Cocoa, Baking	8 months, unopened 3 to 6 months, opened 24 months			Cover tightly
Coconut, shredded (canned or packaged)	U Refrigerate after opening nopened - 1 year	Unopened - 1 year		Refrigerate after opening
Coffee, cans Coffee, instant Coffee, whole bans	unopened - 2 years unopened - 1 to 2 years opened - 2 months 1 to 2 weeks			Storing coffee at room temperature is the most convenient method of storage. It works well for coffee that will be consumed within one to two weeks of purchase.
Cornmeal	18 months			Keep tightly closed

STAPLES OR PANTRY ITEMS CONT.	Room Temperature (70°F)	Refrigerator (37° to 40° F)	Freezer (0°F)	Comments
Cornstarch	Indefinite			Keep tightly closed
Crackers	6 months		3 months	Freeze "sleeves" in heavy plastic bags
Flour, white	6 to 8 months		1 to 2 years	Store in refrigerator
Flour, whole wheat	6 months	1 year	1 to 2 years	
Flour, bread	6 to 8 months	1 year	1 year	
Gelatin, all types	18 months			Keep in original containers
Grits	12 months			Store in airtight container
Herbs, dried	6 to 12 months	1 week	1 to 2 years	
Herbs, fresh				
Honey	12 months, unopened and opened			Cover tightly. If crystallizes, warm jar in pan of hot water
Horseradish	1 year, unopened	4 to 6 months		
Hot Sauce	3 years			
Jelly, Jam & Preserves	Unopened - 12 months	Opened - 6 months		Refrigerate after opening
Maple Syrup	1 year, unopened	3 years, opened		
Marshmallow Cream	Unopened - 3 to 4 months			
Marshmallows	2 to 3 months			Keep in airtight container
Mayonnaise	Unopened - 2 to 3 months	Opened - 2 to 3 months		Refrigerate after opening
Molasses	Unopened - 12 months Opened - 6 months			Keep tightly closed. Refrigerate to extend storage life.
Mustard, prepared yellow	Unopened - 2 years Opened 6 to 8 months			May be refrigerated. Stir before using.
Nuts (Nuts; hazelnuts, walnut, pecans), in shell	4 months	1 year	2 year	Refrigerate after shelling. Freeze for longer storage.
Nuts, vacuum can	3 months			

STAPLES OR PANTRY ITEMS CONT.	Room Temperature (70°F)	Refrigerator (37° to 40° F)	Freezer (0°F)	Comments
Milk (condensed or evaporated), canned Milk, non-fat dry	12 months + unopened - 6 months opened - 3 months			Invert cans every 2 months. Store in airtight container
Olives, bottled or canned	1 year			
Pancake Mixes	6 to 9 months			
Pasta (dry spaghetti, macaroni, etc.)	2 years			Once opened, store in airtight container
Peanut Butter	Unopened - 6 to 9 months Opened - 2 to 3 months			Refrigeration not necessary, but will keep longer if refrigerated.
Pectin, liquid Pectin, dry	opened - 1 month unopened - 1 year 1 year			
Pickles	Unopened - 1 to 2 years			
Pie Crust Mix	Unopened - 8 months			
Popcorn	1 to 2 years			Keep in airtight container
Potatoes, Instant	6 to 12 months			
Pudding Mixes	12 months			
Rice, white Rice, flavoured or herb	2 years + 6 months			Keep tightly closed
Salad Dressings, bottled	Unopened - 10-12 months Opened - 3 months			Refrigerate after opening
Salad Oils (corn, canola) Olive Oil	18 months 24 months			
Sauces & Gravy Mixes	6 to 12 months			
Shortening	Unopened - 18 months Opened - 6 to 8 months			
Spices, whole Spices, ground	1 to 2 years 6 to 12 months		2 to 3 years 1 to 2 years	Store in airtight container in a dry place.
Sugar, granulated Sugar, brown Sugar, confectioners or powdered Sugar, sweeteners	2 years + 4 months 18 months 2 years +			Put in airtight container and cover tightly

STAPLES OR PANTRY ITEMS CONT.	Room Temperature (70°F)	Refrigerator (37° to 40° F)	Freezer (0°F)	Comments
Syrups	12 months			Keep tightly closed. Refrigerate to extend storage life.
Tea, bags Tea, instant Tea, loose	18 months 3 years 2 years			Store in airtight container
Tofu		1 week	5 months	Change storage water every day or two after opening
Vanilla Extract	2 years, unopened 2 months, opened			Keep tightly closed
Vinegar	2 years, unopened 12 months, opened			Keep tightly closed and store in a cool, dark area.
Yeast, dry or frozen compressed Vacuum-sealed bag	Package expiration date Indefinitely		1 to 2 years	
VEGETABLES				
Commercially Frozen			8 to 12 months	Store in original package
Canned Vegetables	1 year	3 to 5 days, opened		Do not store in the opened can. Store in airtight container.
Artichokes		1 week		
Asparagus		3 to 5 days	8 to 12 months	
Beets, carrots		2 weeks	8 to 12 months	
Beans, broccoli, lima beans, peas, summer squash		3 to 6 days	8 to 12 months	
Bell Peppers		1 to 2 weeks	3 to 4 months	Freeze raw, slice in strips or dice
Cabbage		1 week	Do not freeze	To watery to freeze well
Cauliflower		1 week	8 to 12 months	
Celery, chilies		1 week	8 to 12 months	
Corn		Use immediately for best flavour	8 to 12 months	

VEGETABLES CONT.	Room Temperature (70°F)	Refrigerator (37° to 40° F)	Freezer (0°F)	Comments
Garlic bulbs Garlic cloves, individual	3 to 4 months 5 to 10 days		You can freeze whole, unpeeled heads and remove cloves as you need them	Store in a cool, dark, and dry location (dampness is the enemy of garlic, so store away from stove and sink).
Green onions		3 to 5 days	Do not freeze	Become limp
Greens: collards, kale, mustard, spinach, Swiss chard		3 to 5 days	8 to 12 months	
Green beans		1 week	8 to 12 months	
Lettuce and salad greens		1 week	Do not freeze	Too watery; becomes limp
Mushrooms		1 to 2 days	8 to 12 months	Slice thinly and sauté first, otherwise they become rubbery and lose flavour
Radishes		2 weeks		
Squash, hard	3 to 6 months			
Tomatoes			3 to 4 months	Cut in wedges; freeze in usable portions in freezer bags. Use in cooked dishes.

SHELF LIFE RECOMMENDATIONS

HOW LONG DOES BREAD LAST?

Bread Shelf Life

1. Bread – How long does bread last? The shelf life of bread depends on a variety of factors, such as the best by date, the preparation method and how it was stored.
2. Bread is made of flour, water and yeast. Because of its relatively low cost and high calorie density, bread is one of the most popular food staples in the world. It is so versatile that it can be prepared and sold in varieties of any shape or size.
3. So, how long does bread last? When properly stored, the shelf life of bread past its best by date is approximately ...

Opened/Unopened	Pantry	Refrigerator	Freezer
	Past Printed Date	Past Printed Date	Past Printed Date
Bakery Bread last for	2-3 Days	Not recommended	6 months
Package Bagels (soft) last for	5-7 Days	7-14 Days	6 Months
Bakery Bagels last for	2-3 Days	Not Recommended	6 months
Package Bread (soft) last for	5-7 Days	Not Recommended	6 Months
Refrigerator Biscuit Dough (Pillsbury biscuit & rolls) last for	2 Hours	1-2 Weeks	Not recommended
Frozen Bread Dough (soft) last for	1 Day	2-3 Days	1 Year
Cooked French Toast last for	2 Hours	5-7 Days	6-8 Months
Bread Crumbs last for	5-6 Months	Not recommended	6-8 Months
Croutons last for	5-6 Months	Not recommended	Not recommended

4. How to store bread to extend its shelf life?
5. Proper food storage is the key to extending the expiration date of food.
6. You can help keep freshly baked bakery bread fresh by storing it in a paper bag. Paper bags are better than plastic bags because the paper allows the bread to breathe and keep from moisture build up and mold – but it will dry out way faster.

7. Sliced bread is best stored in the plastic bag that it comes in to keep it fresh. Bread can be stored in the fridge, but it is not recommended because it dries out much faster.

8. Freezing is a better long-term option, you can freeze your bread while preserving its taste and texture if you use an air-tight freezer safe container (or the plastic bag it came with a twist tie closure). Foods freeze indefinitely, but the quality declines after the times indicated on the table.

9. How Long Does Rice Last?

10. How long does rice last? The shelf life of rice is influenced by a variety of factors, such as the type of rice, whether it is cooked or not, it’s packaging and how it is stored. It is the most important staple food for a large part of the world’s human population, providing more than one fifth of the calories consumed worldwide by the human species. Like pasta, another grain, rice comes in a variety of types (white, brown, wild, short grain, long grain, etc.) and is often mixed with spices.

11. Because of its relatively low cost, high calorie density, long shelf life and strong nutritional qualities, it is no wonder that it is enjoyed by billions of people daily. However, not all rice is created equal. So how long does white, brown or wild rice last?

Raw	Pantry	Refrigerator	Freezer
	Past Printed Date	Past Printed Date	Past Printed Date
White Rice lasts for	4-5 Years	-	-
Oxygen Free White Rice lasts for	25-30 Years	-	30*Years
Brown Rice lasts for	6-8 Months	8-12 Months	-
Wild Rice lasts for	6-8 Months	-	-
Minute Rice lasts for	4-5 Years	-	-

Cooked	Pantry	Refrigerator	Freezer
	Past Printed Date	Past Printed Date	Past Printed Date
White Rice lasts for		5-7 Days	6-8 Months
Oxygen Free White Rice lasts for	-	5-7 Days	6-8 Months
Brown Rice lasts for	-	4-5 Days	6-8 Months

12. How to store rice to extend its shelf life?

13. Proper food storage is the key to extending the expiration date of food. The best way to store it is in an airtight container in the pantry or another cool dark place with a constant temperature.

14. Once prepared, it should be refrigerated in an airtight container to keep out moisture and other contaminants. Do not allow cooked food to sit out at room temperature for an extended period, two hours is maximum for proper food safety.

15. For a long term option, you can freeze your dry rice while preserving its taste if you use an oxygen-free (oxygen is the source of freezer burn) freezer safe container. Cooked rice may also be frozen, but it is not recommended since it will most likely become mushy when re-heated.

16. Some benefits of proper food storage include eating healthier, cutting food costs and helping the environment by avoiding waste.

17. How Long Do Beans Last?

18. How long do beans last? The **shelf life of beans** depends on a variety of factors, such as the sell by date the preparation method and how the beans are stored. Beans are classified as legumes – not technically a vegetable. They are technically seeds, although sometimes, as in green beans, the whole pod can be eaten. Because of their relatively low cost, low fat, low cholesterol and low maintenance – balanced with high protein, high fiber, high vitamins and high versatility – beans are a great addition to any meal.

19. When properly stored, **the shelf life of beans** past their best before date is approximately ...

Unopened	Pantry	Refrigerator	Freezer
	Past Printed Date	Past Printed Date	Past Printed Date
Dried Beans last for	Indefinite	-	-
Canned Beans last for	1 Year	-	-
Fresh Green Beans last for	1-2 Days	7-10 Days	Cook first
Lentils (Dried) last for	Indefinite	-	-

Opened	Pantry	Refrigerator	Freezer
	Past Printed Date	Past Printed Date	Past Printed Date
Cooked Beans last for	-	5 Days	1 Year
Canned Beans last for	-	5 Days	-
Bean Sprout last for	1 Day	3-4 Days	-
Hummus last for	-	4-5 Days	-

20. How to store beans to extend their shelf life?

- 21.** Correct food storage is the key to extending the expiration date of food. You can help dried and canned beans stay fresh longer by storing them in your pantry (a cool, dark place) at a temperature under 75 degrees Fahrenheit.
- 22.** Fresh beans are best kept in the refrigerator in an airtight container and frozen beans should remain frozen in the freezer.
- 23.** Once cooked, beans should be stored in a tightly closed container to keep out moisture and other contaminants and placed in the fridge. Never store an opened can in the fridge, always place leftover product into a proper airtight container before storing in the fridge.
- 24.** For a long-term option, you can freeze your beans while preserving their taste if you use a freezer safe container. Some benefits of proper food storage include eating healthier, cutting food costs and helping the environment by avoiding waste.
- 25.** If you are still unsure of how long to keep produce or how to store it correctly, please contact one of Garrets Superintendents.