

# LOS ANGELES REGIONAL FOOD BANK

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LOS ANGELES REGIONAL



## A SHELF LIFE GUIDE

### TOPICS:

- Decoding Date Codes
- Proper Storage Temp.
- What Not to Consume
- Product Shelf-Life

Your food is still  
safe to eat!

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**VERSION 1**  
**JAN. 2018**

# DECODING DATE CODES:

## "EXPIRATION DATE"

**Look for it on:** Baby food, formula, medicines, vitamins, yeast, baking powder  
**What it means:** Do NOT distribute after the expiration date! Yeast and baking powder work less well, but are safe to eat.

## Examples:

"Expires 11/15/18"  
"Do not use after 1/15/18"

## "PACK DATE"

**Look for it on:** Canned foods, crackers, cookies, spices.  
**What it means:** This is the date the food was packaged. Often displayed in a numerical code. Usually this food is of good quality and safe to eat for a long time past the date.

"Packed on 03/01/20"  
"22:5306412"  
"KL064"

## "SELL BY" DATE

**Look for it on:** Refrigerated foods such as milk, yogurt, eggs, lunch meat.  
**What it means:** The store must sell these foods before the code date listed. If the food has been handled properly it is still safe to eat and the quality is good.

"Sell by January 1, 2018"  
"Pull Date"

## "USE BY" DATE

**Look for it on:** Crackers, cookies, cold cereals, and other dry, shelf stable food.  
**What it means:** The manufacturer's recommendation for how long the food will be at peak quality. After this date, the food is still safe to eat but begins to lose nutrients and quality.

**Best if used by**  
1/1/2018  
**Use Before**  
1/1/2018

# PROPER STORAGE TEMPERATURES:

## Refrigerator



## Freezer



## Dry Storage



- Temperature should be between **32°F - 40°F**
- Set refrigerator air temp at 39°F to maintain internal temperature of food at 41°F
- Leave space for air to circulate between items in the fridge

- Temperature should be **0°F**
- Freezer can be as cold as **-20°F** if you have something like ice cream present.

- Temperature between **50° - 70°F**.
- Rotate stock so that older foods are distributed first.



## TIPS on Storing Fresh Produce:



- Most fruits and vegetables have the best quality when kept refrigerated. There are, however some exceptions.
- Tomato taste best if not refrigerated. Cold storage can cause them to become grainy.
- Bananas should not be refrigerated unless fully ripe, and then they should be used within 1-2 days. Refrigeration will cause banana skin to blacken, but the fruit will not ripen while cold.
- If they are very fresh; apples, mangoes, and stone fruits (plums, peaches, etc.) can be stored at room temperature, but these items should be refrigerated as they ripen.
- Hardy vegetables like onions, garlic, potatoes, sweet potatoes, and winter squash can be stored in cool, dark places outside of the cooler.
- Store eggs in their original carton.

# WHAT NOT TO CONSUME:

## CANS & JARS

- Leaking or stained
- Swollen can
- Rusty
- Badly dented, crimped or pinched
- Container is cracked
- Foul odor
- Safety seals are broken or missing
- Lids are loose or missing
- Food exhibit changed color or odor--**never taste suspicious foods!**

## BOXES

### Inside bag:

- Is torn or leaking
- Has moldy or foreign objects inside
- Seals are ripped

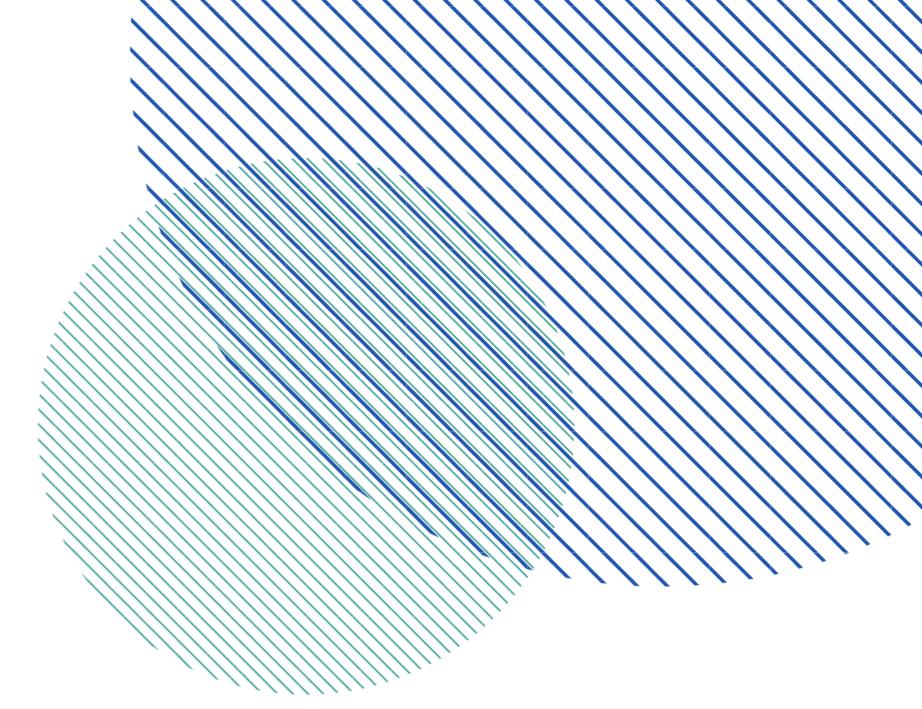
### W/out an inside bag:

- Is open or torn
- Has live or dead insects, webs, or droppings
- Is stained or wet

### TIPS:

- Store cans and boxes off the floor, and 18 inches away from the wall.
- Store canned and boxed goods in a clean, dry, and cool area (below 85°F).
- Extremely hot (over 100°F) and cold (below 30°F) temperatures can damage canned goods and shorten shelf life.
- Always rotate your stock--First in-First out (FIFO)! Distribute or use older products before newer ones.

# PRODUCT SHELF LIFE:



## Condiments & Sauces

	Pantry Stored	Refrigeration after opening
Barbecue sauce (bottled)	1 year	4 months
Jams, jellies and preserves	6-18 months	6-12 months
Ketchup, cocktail, or chili sauce	1 year	6 months
Mayonnaise, commercial	3-6 months	2 months
Mustard	1-2 years	1 year
Olives, black and green	12-18 months	2 weeks
Pickles	1 year	1-3 months
Salad dressing, commercial	10-12 months	1-3 months
Salsa, picante and taco sauces	1 year	1 month
Spaghetti sauce, in jars	18 months	4 days
Vinegar	2 years	
Worcestershire sauce	1 year	

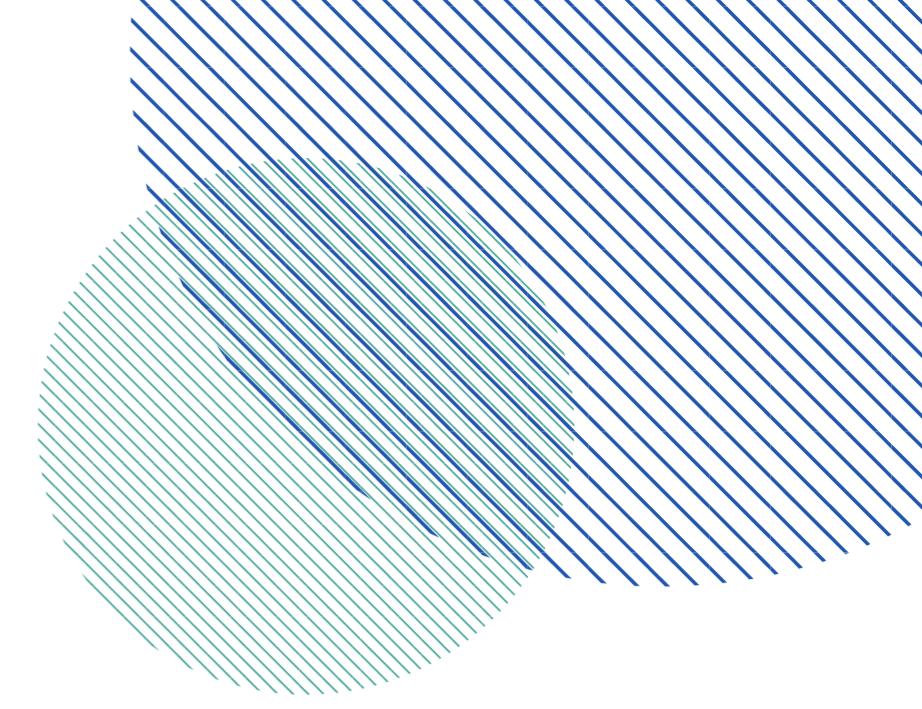
## Baby Food

	After opening	Pantry Tips
Cereal, dry mixes	1 month, if pantry stored	Should be discarded after use-by date
Formula, prepared	1 hour, if pantry stored 1 day, if refrigerated	Should be discarded after use-by date
Jars or pouches	2-3 days, if refrigerated	Should be discarded after use-by date
Liquid concentrate or ready-to-feed formula	2 days, if refrigerated	Should be discarded after use-by date

## Canned Foods

	Pantry Stored	Refrigeration after opening
Beans	2-5 years	3-4 days
Fish: salmon, tuna, sardines, mackerel	2-5 years	3-4 days
Fruit	12-18 months	5-7 days
Juices	12-18 months	5-7 days
Meat: beef, chicken, pork, turkey	10-12 months	3-4 days
Soups	2-5 years	3-4 days
Tomato soup	12-18 months	5-7 days
Vegetables	2-5 years	3-4 days

# PRODUCT SHELF LIFE:



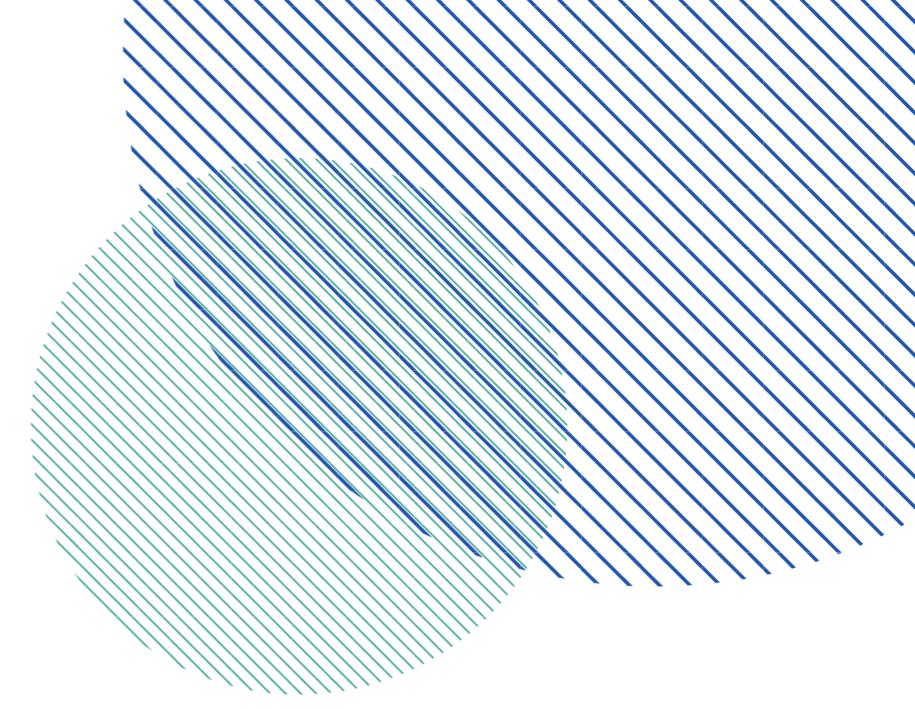
## Baking & Cooking

	Pantry Stored	After Opening
Biscuit or Pancake mix	12 months	
Baking mixes (brownie, cake)	12-18 months	
Baking Powder	6-18 months	3-6 months pantry
Baking Soda	2-3 years	6 months pantry
Cornmeal, regular	6-22 months	2 years pantry 1 year refrigerated
Cornmeal, stone ground or blue	1 month	2-4 months refrigerated
Flour, white	6-12 months	6-8 months pantry 1 year refrigerated
Flour, whole wheat	3-6 months	6-8 months refrigerated
Frosting or icing	10-12 months	2-3 weeks refrigerated
Oils, olive or vegetable	6-12 months	3-5 months pantry 4 months refrigerated
Pudding mixes (shelf stable)	12 months	3-4 months pantry
Shortening, solid	12-18 months	6-12 months pantry
Spices, ground	6-18 months	2-3 years pantry
Sugar substitutes	2-3 years	Indefinitely pantry
Sugar (brown, confectioners, granulates)	6-22 months	18-24 months pantry

## Bakery

	Pantry Stored	Refrigerated after opening	Stored frozen
Commercial bread products (pan bread, flat bread, rolls and buns)	12 months	2-3 weeks	3-5 months
Commerical cakes and muffins	3-7 days	7-10 days	6 months
Cookies, crispy	4-6 months		8-12 months
Cookies, soft	2-3 months		8-12 months
Corn tortillas	7-10 days	6-8 weeks	6-8 months
Flour tortillas	1 week	3-4 weeks	6-8 months
Pita bread	2-4 days	4-7 days	4 months
Pastries, Danish	5-10 days	14 months	Do not freeze
Tortillas	3 months	3 months	6 months
Whole wheat tortillas	1 week	3-4 weeks	6-8 months

# PRODUCT SHELF LIFE:



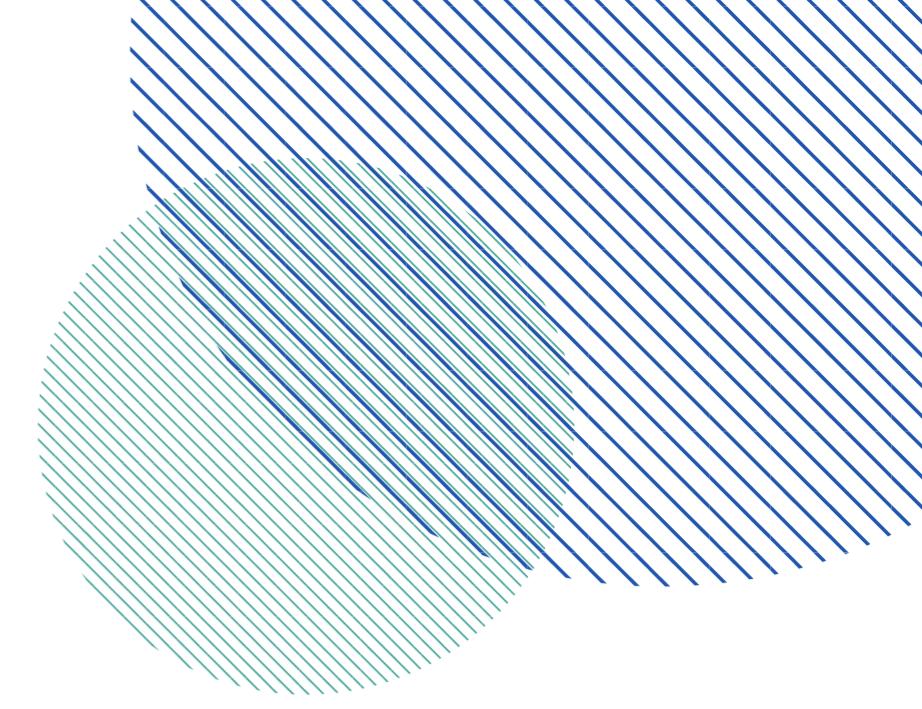
Beverages	Pantry Stored	Pantry stored after opening	Refrigerated after opening
Coffee, ground (non-vacuum)	3-5 months	3-5 weeks	1-2 years frozen
Coffee, instant	1 year	2-3 months	
Coffee, whole beans	3-5 months	3-5 months	3-4 months
Fruit juice in cartons, punch	3 weeks	7-12 days	8-12 days
Juice, boxes	Use-by date		8-12 days
Soda (carbonated cola drinks, mixers, diet soda, bottles or cans)			2-3 days
Soy or rice beverages			
Tea, bags	18-36 months		
Tea, instant	2-3 years		
Tea, loose*	2 years		
Water, commercially bottled* (including flavored)	Indefinitely		

## Dairy Products & Eggs

	Refrigerator	Frozen
Butter	1-2 months	6-9 months
Buttermilk	1-2 weeks	3 months
Cheese, hard (cheddar, Swiss, block parmesan)	6 months 3-4 weeks, if refrigerated after opening	6 months
Cheese, processed slices	3-4 weeks	
Cheese, shredded (cheddar, mozzarella, etc.)	1 month	3-4 months
Cheese, soft (brie, bel paese)	1-2 weeks	6 months
Coffee creamer, liquid refrigerated	3 weeks	
Cottage cheese, ricotta	2 weeks 1 week, if refrigerated after opening	7-10 days
Cream cheese	2 weeks	
Cream, half-and-half	3-4 days	4 months
Cream, heavy	10 days	3-4 months
Cream, light	1 week	3-4 months



# PRODUCT SHELF LIFE:



## Dairy Products & Eggs cont.

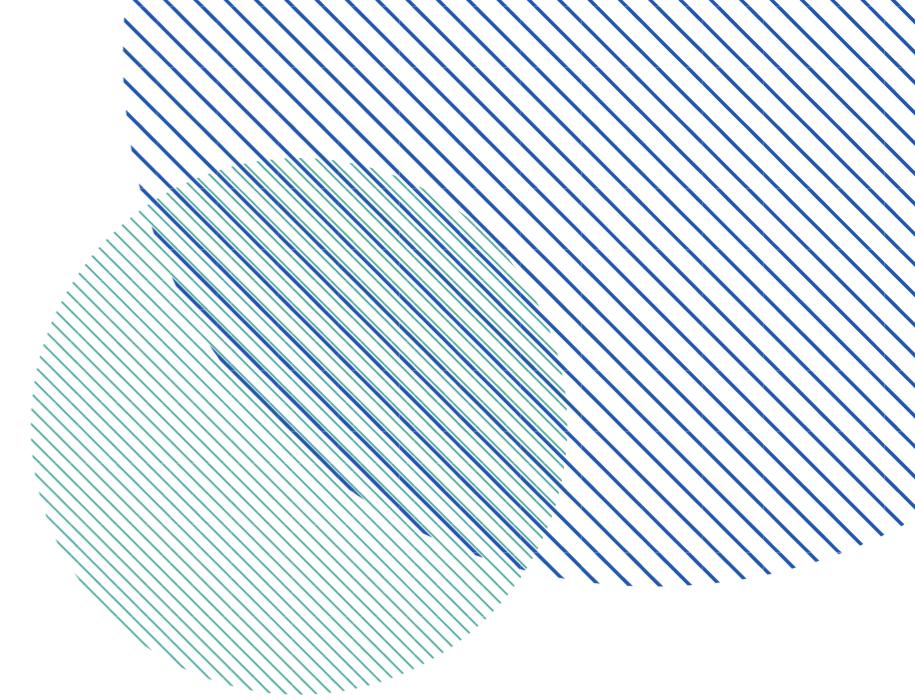
	Refrigerator	Frozen
Egg substitutes, liquid	7 days 3 days, if refrigerated after opening	
Eggs, in shell	3-5 weeks	
Margarine	6 months	12 months
Milk, plain or flavored	1 week	3 months
Pudding	Package use-by date 2 days, if refrigerated after opening	
Sour cream	Package use-by date	
Whipped cream, aerosol can	3-4 weeks	
Whipped topping, aerosol can	3 months	
Whipped topping, tub	2 weeks	14 months
Yogurt	1-2 weeks	1-2 months

## Deli & Prepared Foods

	Refrigerator	Frozen
Cooked Pasta	3-5 days	1-2 months
Cooked Rice	4-6 days	6 months
Fruit, cut	Package use-by date 4 days, if refrigerated after opening	
Guacamole	3-4 days	3-4 months
Hummus, commercial	3 months 7 days, if refrigerated after opening	
Hummus, traditional	7 days	
Leftovers, pizza	3-4 days	1-2 months
Leftovers (without meat, fish, poultry or egg i.e. cooked vegetables, rice or potatoes)	3-4 days	1-2 months
Leftovers (with meat, fish, poultry or egg)	3-4 days	2-3 months
Luncheon meat or poultry, pre-packaged	2 weeks 3-5 days, if refrigerated after opening	1-2 months
Luncheon meat or poultry, store-sliced	3-5 days	1-2 months
Main dishes or meals, hot or refrigerated	3-4 days	2-3 months
Meats, covered with gravy or broth	3-4 days	6 months



# PRODUCT SHELF LIFE:



## Deli & Prepared Foods cont.

	Refrigerator	Frozen
Salads (containing meat, fish, poultry or eggs)	3-4 days	
Salads, vegetable	3-5 days	
Soups, stews	3-4 days	2-3 months

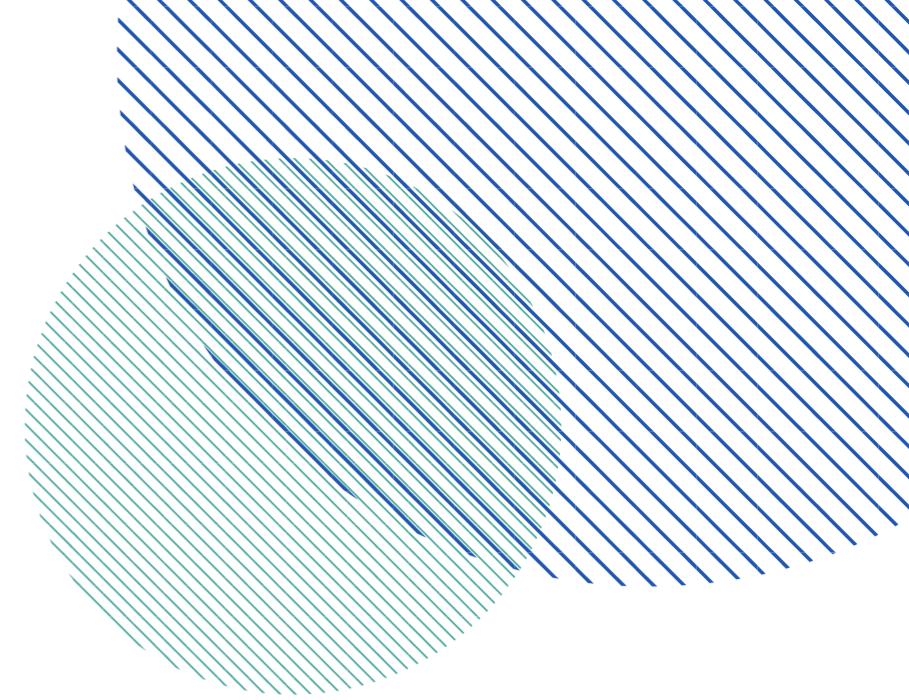
## Food Purchased Frozen

	Frozen
Bread, bagels	3 months
Chicken, nuggets/patties	2 months
Desserts, frozen baked goods	3-4 months
Desserts, frozen cream pies	1-2 months
Desserts, frozen fruit pies	6-8 months
Dough, commercial (bread or cookie)	6 months
Egg substitutes	7 days, if refrigerated after opening 12 months frozen
Fish, breaded	18 months
Fish, raw but headed and gutted	6 months
Frozen potato products (fries, hash browns, tater tots)	6-12 months
Fruits	4-6 months
Ice Cream	2-4 months
Ice pops	9 months
Juice concentrates	1-2 years
Pancakes, waffles	2 months
Sausages, precooked	1-2 months
Sausages, uncooked	1-2 months
Soy meat substitutes	12-18 months
TV dinners: pies, casseroles, shrimp, ham, pork, or sausage	3-4 months
TV dinners: beef, turkey, chicken, or fish	6 months
Vegetables	8 months

- TIPS:**
- Keep food frozen, it will last much longer than if it exposed to changing temperatures.
  - Keep all frozen food at 0 F or below.
  - Leave meat, poultry, and seafood in the original packaging



# PRODUCT SHELF LIFE:

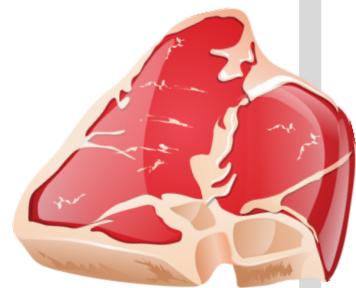


## Grains, Beans & Pasta

	Pantry Stored	Pantry stored after opening
Beans, dried	1-2 years	1 year
Lentils, dried	1 year	1 year
Pasta, dry (without egg)	2 years	1 year
Pasta, dry (egg noodles)	2 years	1-2 months
Peas, dried split)	1 year	1 year
Rice, brown		1 year 6 months, if refrigerated after
Rice, white or wild		1 year 6 months, if refrigerated after

## Meat & Fish/Seafood, fresh

	Refrigerator Stored	Frozen
Beef: roasts, steaks	3-5 days	4-12 months
Pork: roasts, chops		
Lamb: roasts, steaks/chops		
Crab, canned	6 months unopened 5-7 days opened	Do not freeze
Crab, legs	3-5 days	9-12 months
Fatty fish (bluefish, catfish, mackerel, mullet, salmon, tuna, etc.)	1-2 days	2-3 months
Ground meats (beef, pork, lamb, or poultry)	1-2 days	3-4 months
Lean fish (cod, flounder, haddock, halibut, sole, etc.)	1-2 days	6-10 months
Lean fish (pollock, ocean perch, rockfish, sea trout)	1-2 days	4-8 months
Lobster tails, raw	4-5 days	6-9 months
Poultry: chicken or turkey, whole cuts	1-2 days	12 months
Shrimp, raw	2 days	9 months
Scallops, raw	1-2 days	3-6 months



Meats should be completely frozen, and stored at 0°F or lower. Do NOT leave meats at room temperature unnecessarily!



Prepared foods should be kept refrigerated. These foods are perishable, and leaving them at room temperature will shorten their shelf life.

# PRODUCT SHELF LIFE:

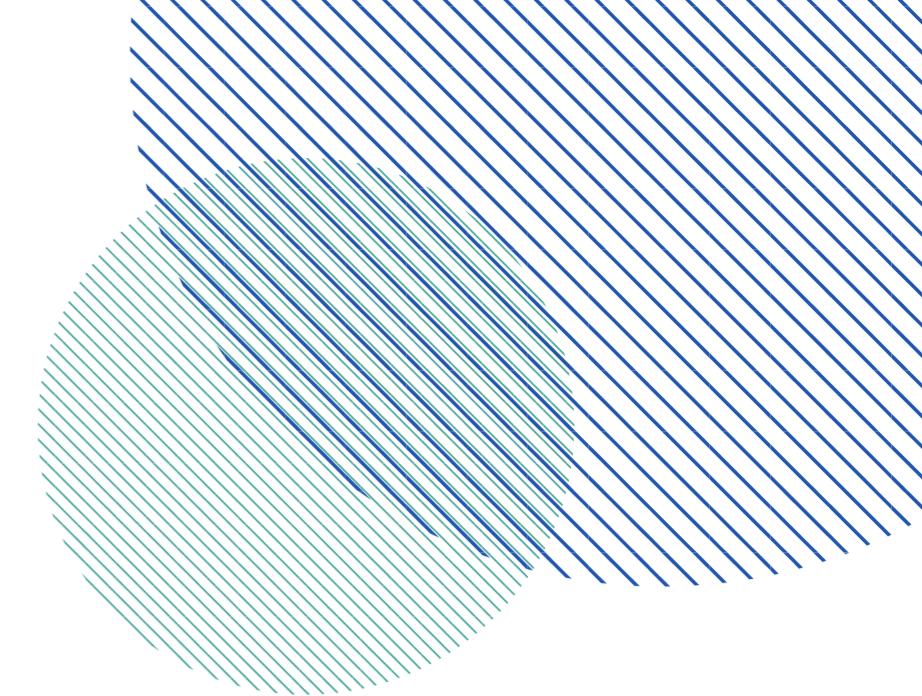
## Meat & Fish/Seafood, smoked or processed

	Refrigerator Stored	Frozen
Bacon	1 week 1 week, if refrigerated after opening	1 month
Chicken nuggets/patties		1-3 months
Chicken, fried or rotisserie	3-4 days	4 months
Ham	1 week	
Hot dogs	2 weeks 1 week, if refrigerated after opening	1-2 months
Sausage, hard/dry/sliced (pepperoni)	2-3 weeks	1-2 months
Sausage, raw bulk type or patties	1-2 days	1-2 months
Sausage, fully cooked smoked links/kielbasa	1 week	1-2 months

## Shelf Stable Foods

	Pantry Stored	Pantry stored after opening	Refrigerated after opening
Almond milk, shelf stable	1 month		
Applesauce, commercial	12-18 months	Not recommended	7-10 days
Bacon, fully cooked	6 months		5-14 days
Canned chicken	5 years		3-4 days
Cereal, cook before eating (oatmeal)	12 months	6-12 months	
Chocolate syrup	2 years	Not recommended	6 months
Coconut milk, shelf-stable	1 month		
Coffee creamer, liquid shelf-stable	9-12 months		
Crackers	8 months	1 month	3-4 months
Fruits, dried	6 months	1 month	6 months
Ham, shelf-stable cans	6-9 months		5-14 days
Juice, bottle shelf-stable	9 months		
Milk, canned evaporated or condensed	12 months		4-5 days
Milk, shelf-stable UHT	6 months		
Meat products, canned	5 years		3-4 days
Nuts, jars or cans	1 year	2-9 months	4-6 months

# PRODUCT SHELF LIFE:



## Shelf Stable Foods cont.

	Pantry Stored	Pantry stored after opening	Refrigerated after opening
Nutritional aid supplements (Boost, etc.)	1 year		
Peanut butter, commercial	6-24 months	2-3 months	
Popcorn, commercially popped in bags	2-3 months	1-2 weeks	
Popcorn, dry kernels in jar	2 years	1 year	
Popcorn, microwave packets	6-12 months	1-2 days	
Potato chips	Use-by date 2 months	1-2 weeks	
Potatoes, instant	10-15 months	6-12 months	
Powdered milk	2-10 years		
Pretzels	4-9 months	3 weeks	
Pudding mixes	1 year	3-4 months	
Soup mixes, dry bouillon	1 year	1 year	
Syrup	1 year		6 months
Toaster pastries	6-12 months	1-2 weeks	

Information courtesy of Foodsafety.gov | FoodKeeper App  
Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank  
Designed by Amirah Dales





Fighting Hunger. Giving Hope.

**\*\*\*Disclaimer:** The "A Shelf Life Guide" information is reliable, however, please remember that individual foods will vary and that this advice should only be taken as a guideline and not a replacement for your health care professional. If you have any additional questions please contact the C&N Department at 323.234.3030 or [nutritioned@lafoodbank.org](mailto:nutritioned@lafoodbank.org).\*\*\*

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