

The table below provides storage and consumption guidelines by product type

#### About Product Dates:

Manufacturers provide dating on products to help consumers and retailers decide when food is of best quality. Except for infant formula, dates are not an indicator of the product's safety, but rather, a general guide to freshness (USDA, 2019).

Note the definitions for different types of food product dating, below. When evaluating food safety, it is important to consider the meaning of these dates as well as product appearance and storage conditions.

**Sell-By date:** Tells the store how long to display the product for sale. The store rotates the stock to be sure the oldest is sold first. Consumers can add days before eating it.

**Best When Used By date:** Tells when to eat or drink the product for the highest quality flavor. This is not a purchase or safety date.

**Use-By date:** The last date to use the product at peak quality.

**Closed or Coded date:** Packing numbers for the food company.

Food Banks may adhere to "extended dates" provided by manufacturers, specifying food safety and quality beyond what is required for retail sale. See our "Expiration Dates Explained" document in the toolkit.

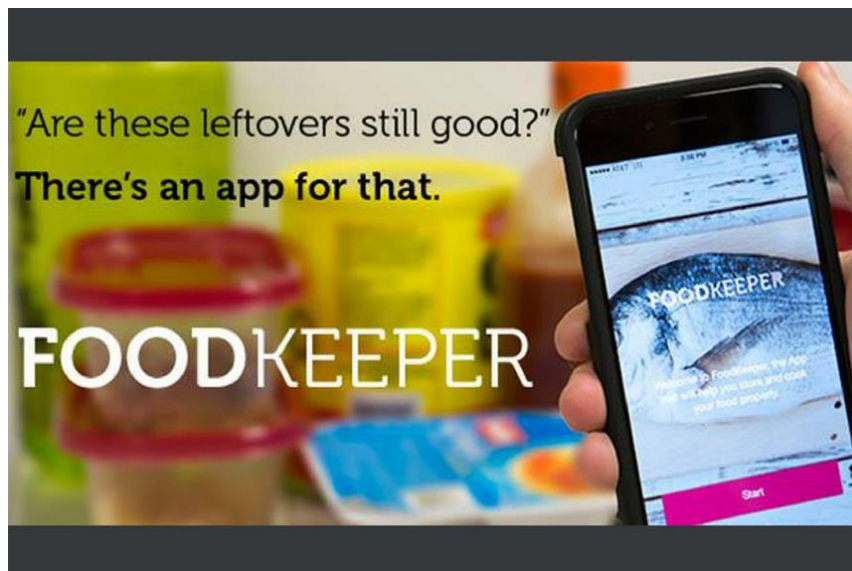
#### Perishable Donation Handling and Storage Guidelines

- Items must be in sealed/unopened labeled packaging with code date visible, including pre-cut and deli foods. (Exception: fresh uncut produce)
- Items should not be in compromised packaging. Minor damage to exterior packaging is acceptable for donation if inner packaging is intact.
- Product must be free of discoloration, off odor, mold or decay, leakage or seeping.
- Code date refers to sell-by, best-by, use-by and expiration.

Dept.	Handling/Storage	Donate by
<b>Bakery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Store at room temperature in a dry, clean area</li> <li>• No stale or moldy product</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-3 days past code date</li> </ul>
<b>Dairy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep refrigerated at or below 40°F</li> <li>• Broken eggs cannot be donated or used for meals</li> <li>• Fresh eggs cannot be frozen</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By code date</li> <li>• If frozen by code date: 3 months past code date</li> </ul>
<b>Meat</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Store in freezer at 0°F or below while awaiting pick up and/or freeze prior to code date</li> <li>• Meats should be kept separated by category (beef, pork, poultry and seafood) to prevent cross-contamination</li> <li>• No defrosted, refrozen, freezer burn, discolored product</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Frozen Seafood only:</i> 3 mo. past code date</li> <li>• <i>Frozen Meat (preferred):</i> 9 mo. past code date</li> <li>• <i>Fresh meat:</i> 7 days prior to code date</li> </ul>
<b>Deli</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Store at 40° or below</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepared items: 2 days past code date</li> <li>• Meats/cheese: Freeze or donate within 24 hours of code date</li> </ul>
<b>Dry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dry storage, product must be kept 6 in off the floor/ground</li> <li>• OTC and prescription medications are not accepted.</li> <li>• Keep non-food, pet food and food items separated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Canned: 18 mo. past code date</li> <li>• Dry food: 12 mo. past code date</li> </ul>
<b>Produce</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Store at 40° F</li> <li>• In good condition, not moldy or decayed or having bad odor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Donate while in good condition</li> </ul>
<b>Frozen</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must be maintained at 0° F</li> <li>• Defrosted and/or refrozen items should not be donated.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 months past code date</li> </ul>
<b>Baby Food</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Store at room temperature</li> <li>• "Wet" baby food accepted from retail/wholesale donors only</li> <li>• No individual/residential/food drive donors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Donate 21 days <i>before</i> code date.</li> <li>• Safety chain must be traceable.</li> </ul>

### Do you have a question about a specific product?

Reach out to your SMFB Agency Representative, or consider downloading the USDA's FoodKeeper app!



When in doubt, throw it out! Call us with questions: 602-322-7861