



Shelf Life Guidelines



These are general guidelines, based on best quality conditions. Use your judgement & visual clues (molding, wilting, discoloring, damage, etc) to pull before these dates if needed.

NOTE: These guidelines do not apply to USDA TEFAP foods. Those items should always be distributed before their best by or expiration date per the USDA.

Dairy Products and Eggs

Product	Refrigerated	Frozen
Butter	1–3 Months	6–9 Months
Buttermilk	1–2 Weeks	3 Months
Cheese, hard (parmesan, cheddar)	Unopened: 6 Months; Opened: 3–4 Wks	6 Months
Cheese, parmesan, shredded	12 Months	3–4 Months
Cheese, shredded, cheddar, mozzarella	1 Month	3–4 Months
Cheese, processed slices	3–4 Weeks	3–4 Months
Cheese, soft (such as brie, goat, etc.)	1–2 Weeks	6 Months
Coffee creamer, liquid refrigerated	3 Weeks	See package instructions
Cottage cheese, ricotta	Unopened: 2 weeks; Opened: 1 Week	Does not freeze well
Cream cheese	2 Weeks	Does not freeze well
Cream, whipping, ultra-pasteurized	Unopened: 1 Month; Opened: 1 Week	Do not freeze
Cream, whipped, sweetened	1 Day	1–2 Months
Cream, half and half	3–4 Days	4 Months
Cream, heavy	10 Days	3–4 Months
Cream, light	1 Week	3–4 Months; use for cooking
Dips, sour cream based	2 Weeks	Do not freeze
Egg substitutes, liquid	10 Days	Do not freeze
Egg substitutes, unopened	10 Days	Do not freeze
Egg substitutes, opened	3 Days	Do not freeze
Eggnog, commercial	3–5 Days	6 Months
Eggs, in shell	3–5 Weeks	Not recommended
Eggs, raw whites and yolks	2–4 Days	12 Months
Eggs, hard boiled (cooked)	1 Week	Does not freeze well
Kefir (fermented milk)	Unopened: 1 Week; Opened: 1–2 Days	Do not freeze
Margarine	6 Months	12 Months
Milk, plain or flavored	1 Week	3 Months
Pudding	Package use-by date; Opened: 2 Days	Do not freeze
Sour cream	7–21 Days; package use-by date	Does not freeze well
Whipped cream, aerosol can	3–4 Weeks	Do not freeze
Whipped topping, aerosol can	3 Months	Do not freeze
Whipped topping, tub	2 Weeks	14 Months

Meat and Poultry

Product	Refrigerated	Frozen
Bacon	1 Week	6 Months
Bacon, once opened	1 Week	2 Month
Corned beef, in pouch w/ pickling juices	5-7 Days	9-12 Months
Beef, lamb, pork/veal chops, steak/roast	3-5 Days	9-12 Months
Ground meat or stew meat	1-2 Days	6 Months
Yogurt	14 Days	3 Months

Ham, canned ("keep refrigerated")	6-9 Months	Do not freeze
Ham, fully cooked, whole	1 Week	9 Months
Ham, fully cooked, slices, half	3-4 Days	9 Months
Ham, cook before eating	1 Week	9 Months
Hot dogs, sealed in package	2 Weeks	9 Months
Hot dogs, after opening	1 Week	1-2 Months
Lunch meats, sealed in package	2 Weeks	1-2 Months
Lunch meats, after opening	3-5 Days	1-2 Months
Sausage, raw bulk type or patties	1-2 Days	6 Months
Sausage, fully cooked smoked links, kielbasa	1 Week	9 Months
Sausage, hard, dry (pepperoni), sliced	2-3 Months	6 Months

Chicken or turkey, whole	1-2 Days	12 Months
Chicken or turkey parts	1-2 Days	9 Months
Duckling or goose, whole	1-2 Days	6 Months
Giblets	1-2 Days	3-4 Months
Stuffed, raw pork chops or chicken	1-2 Days	9 Months
Raw kabobs with vegetables	1-2 Days	3-4 Months
Chicken nuggets, patties	1-2 Days	1-3 Months
Cooked poultry dishes	3-4 Days	4-6 Months
Fried chicken	3-4 Days	4 Months
Ground turkey or chicken	1-2 Days	9 Months

Fresh Fish

Product	Refrigerated	Frozen
Lean fish (cod, flounder, haddock, halibut, sole, etc.)	4–6 Days	6–10 Months
Lean fish (pollock, ocean perch, rockfish, sea trout)	4–6 Days	4–8 Months
Fatty fish (bluefish, mackerel, mullet, salmon, tuna, etc.)	4–6 Days	2–3 Months
Cooked fish, all	3–4 Days	1–2 Months
Surimi seafood	3 Months or package use-by date	9 Months

Shellfish

Product	Refrigerated	Frozen
Shrimp, scallops, crayfish, squid	1–3 Days	6–18 Months
Shucked clams, mussels, and oysters	3–10 Days	3–4 Months
Crab meat, fresh	1–3 Days	2–4 Months
Crab meat, pasteurized	Unopened: 10–12 Months; Opened: 3–5 Days	4–10 Months

Crab legs, king, dungeness, snow	2–4 Days	9–12 Months
Live clams, mussels, crab, and oysters	1–2 Days	2–3 Months
Live lobsters	Up to 2 weeks in a chilled tank	Do not freeze
Fresh lobster tails	1–2 Days	2–4 Weeks
Fresh clams, mussels, oysters	5–10 Days	Do not freeze
Fresh whole lobster	1–2 Days	Do not freeze
Cooked shellfish, all	3–4 Days	1–3 Months

Smoked Fish

Product	Refrigerated	Frozen
Herring, glass packed, in wine sauce	8–12 Months	Do not freeze
Fish, hot smoked, air pack	14–45 Days	9–12 Months
Fish, hot smoked, vacuum pack	14–45 Days	6 Months–1 Year
Fish, cold smoked, air pack	14–30 Days	9–12 Months
Fish, cold smoked, vacuum pack	21–30 Days	9–12 Months

Vegetarian Proteins

Product	Unopened in Pantry	Refrigerated	Frozen
Tofu		Package use-by date or Unopened: 1 Week; Opened: 2–3 Days	6 Months
Textured soy protein (TSP)	Unopened: 2 Years; Opened Opened: 3–4 Months		

Deli & Prepared Foods

Deli Product	Refrigerator	Freezer
Cheese, store sliced hard cheese such as cheddar or swiss	3–4 Weeks	6 Months
Cheese, soft (such as brie, bel paese, goat cheese, fresh mozzarella)	1–2 Weeks	6 Months
Chicken, rotisserie or fried	3–4 Days	4 Months
Commercial brand vacuum packed dinners with USDA seal	2 Weeks	6 Months
Cooked pasta	3–5 Days	6 Months
Cooked rice	4–6 Days	6 Months
Fruit, cut	Package use-by date; Opened: 4 Days	Do not freeze
Guacamole	5–7 Days	6 Months
Hummus, pasteurized	3 Months	Does not freeze well
Hummus, with preservatives	2 Months	Does not freeze well
Hummus, traditional (no preservatives, not pasteurized)	7 Days	Does not freeze well
Luncheon meats, store-sliced	3–5 Days	1–2 Months
Main dishes or meals, hot or refrigerated	3–4 Days	6 Months
Meats covered with gravy or broth	3–4 Days	6 Months
Olives	2 Months	Do not freeze
Pate	1–2 Days	1–2 Months
Pudding	Package use-by date; Opened: 2 Days	Do not freeze
Salads containing meat, fish, poultry or eggs	3–4 Days	Do not freeze
Salads, vegetable	3–5 Days	Do not freeze
Side dishes such as cooked vegetables, rice or potatoes	3–4 Days	6 Months
Soup, stews	3–4 Days	6 Months

Bakery Products

Bakery Product	Unopened in Pantry	Refrigerator After Opening	Freezer
Commercial bread products (including pan breads, flat breads, rolls and buns)	14–18 Days	2–3 Weeks	3–5 Months
Tortillas	3 Months	3 Months	6 Months
Commercial cakes and muffins	3–7 Days	7–10 Days	6 Months
Cheesecake		5–7 Days	3–6 Months
Cookies, soft	2–3 Months		8–12 Months
Cookies, crispy	4–6 Months		8–12 Months
Dairy filled eclairs		2–3 Days	3 Months
Doughnuts	1 –2 Days	2 Days	3–6 Months
Fruit cake	6 Months	12 Months	12 Months
Pastries, danish	5–10 Days	14 Days	3–6 Months
Pies, chiffon		1–2 Days	3–6 Months
Pies, cream		3–4 Days	3–6 Months
Pies, fruit	1–2 Days	1 Week	8 Months
Pies, mincemeat	2 Hours	1 Week	8 Months
Pies, pecan	2 Hours	3–4 Days	3–6 Months
Pies, pumpkin	2 Hours	3–4 Days	3–6 Months
Quiche	2 Hours	3–5 Days	3–6 Months

Grains, Beans & Pasta

Product	Unopened in Pantry	Refrigerator After Opening	In Pantry After Opening
Beans, dried	1–2 Years		1 Year
Lentils, dried	12 Months		12 Months
Pasta, dry, without eggs	2 Years		1 Year
Dry egg noodles	2 Years		1–2 Months
Peas, dried split	12 Months		12 Months
Rice, white or wild	2 Years	6 Months	1 Year
Rice, brown	1 Year	6 Months	1 Year

Fresh Fruits

Fruit	Pantry	Refrigerator	Freezer
Apples	3 Weeks	4–6 Weeks	Cooked: 8 Months
Apricots	Until ripe	2–5 Days	Do not freeze
Avocados	Until ripe	3–4 Days	Do not freeze
Bananas	Until ripe	3 Days, skin will blacken	2–3 Months
Berries, cherries, goose berries, lychee	Until ripe	7 Days	12 Months
Black berries, cherries, currants, raspberries, strawberries	Until ripe	3–6 Days	12 Months
Blueberries	Until ripe	10 Days	12 Months
Cherimoya	Until ripe	4 Days	10–12 Months
Citrus fruit	10 Days	1–3 Weeks	Do not freeze
Coconut, shredded	Unopened: 1 Year; Opened: 6 Months	8 Months	1 Year
Coconuts, fresh, whole, unopened	1 Week	2–3 Weeks	Do not freeze
Cranberries		2 Months	12 Months

Dates	2 Months	12 Months	1–2 Years
Grapes	1 Day	1 Week	Whole, 1 Month
Guava	Until ripe—they spoil quickly	2–4 Days	Does not freeze well
Kiwi fruit	Until ripe	3–6 Days	Do not freeze
Melons	Until ripe, then up to 7 Days	Whole: 2 Weeks; Cut: 2–4 Days	Balls, 1 Month
Papaya, mango, passionfruit	3–5 Days	1 Week	6–8 Months
Peaches, nectarines, plums, pears,	Until ripe, then 1–2 Days	3–5 Days	Sliced, lemon juice and sugar, 2 Months
Pineapple	Until ripe, then 1–2 Days	5–7 Days	10–12 Months
Plantains	Until ripe, then 1–2 Days	3–5 Days	10–12 Months
Pomegranate	2–5 Days	1–3 Months	10–12 Months

Fresh Vegetables

Vegetable	Pantry	Raw, Refrigerator	Frozen*
Artichokes, whole	1–2 Days	1–2 Weeks	Do not freeze
Asparagus		3–4 Days	5 Months
Beans and peas		3–5 Days	8 Months
Beets	1 Day	7–14 Days	6–8 Months
Bok choy		2–3 Days	10–12 Months
Broccoli and broccoli raab		3–5 Days	10–12 Months
Brussels sprouts		3–5 Days	10–12 Months
Cabbage		1–2 Weeks	10–12 Months
Carrots and parsnips		2–3 Weeks	10–12 Months
Cauliflower		3–5 Days	10–12 Months
Celery		1–2 Weeks	10–12 Months
Corn on the cob		1–2 Days	8 Months
Cucumbers		4–6 Days	Do not freeze
Eggplant	1 Day	4–7 Days	6–8 Months
Garlic	1 Month (unbroken bulbs)	3–14 Days (individual cloves)	1 Month
Ginger root	2–5 Days	2–3 Weeks	6 Months
Greens		1–4 Days	10–12 Months
Herbs		7–10 Days	1–2 Months
Leeks		1–2 Weeks	10–12 Months
Lettuce, iceberg, romaine		1–2 Weeks	Do not freeze
Lettuce, leaf, spinach		3–7 Days	Do not freeze
Mushrooms		3–7 Days	10–12 Months
Okra	Highly perishable; 1 Day	2–3 Days	10–12 Months
Onions, dry	1 Month	2 Months	10–12 Months
Onions, spring or green	1 Month	1 Week	10–12 Months
Peppers		4–14 Days	6–8 Months
Potatoes	1–2 Months	1–2 Weeks	10–12 Months
Pumpkins	2–3 Months	3–5 Months	
Radishes		10–14 Days	Do not freeze
Rhubarb		3–7 Days	
Rutabagas	1 Week	2–3 Weeks	8–10 Months
Summer Squash/zucchini	1–5 Days	4–5 Days	10–12 Months
Squash, winter	2–6 Weeks	1–3 Months	10–12 Months
Tamarind	1–3 Weeks	Just the pulp: 6 Months	Just the pulp: 1 Year
Tomatoes	Until ripe, then up to 7 Days	2–7 Days	2 Months
Turnips		2 Weeks	8–10 Months

Foods Purchased Frozen

Frozen Product	Freezer	Refrigerator After Thawing
Bagels	6 Months	1–2 Weeks
Burritos, sandwiches	2 Months (follow package cooking instructions)	3–4 Days

Dough, commercial (bread or cookie)	Package use–by date	After baking, 4–7 Days
Egg substitutes	12 Months	Package use–by date
Fish, breaded	18 Months	Do not defrost; cook frozen
Fish, raw but headed and gutted	6 Months	1–2 Days
Frozen potato products (fries, hashbrowns, tater tots)	6–12 Months	3–4 Days
Frozen pretzels	9–12 Months	2–3 Weeks
Fruits such as berries, melons	4–6 Months	4–5 Days
Guacamole	3–4 Months	3–4 Days
Ice cream	2–4 Months	Not recommended
Ice pops	9 Months	Not recommended
Juice concentrates	1–2 Years	7–10 Days

Lobster tails	2–4 Weeks	2 Days
Pancakes, waffles	2 Months	3–4 Days
Sausages, uncooked	1–2 Months	1–2 Days
Sausage, precooked	1–2 Months	1 Week
Sherbet, sorbet	2–4 Months	Not recommended
Shrimp and shellfish	12–18 Months	1–2 Days
Soy crumbles and hot dogs	9 Months	3–4 Days
Soy meat substitutes	12–18 Months	3–4 Days
Tempeh	6 Months	1–2 Weeks
Topping, whipped	6 Months	2 Weeks
Frozen meals, entrees and breakfast foods	3 Months	Do not defrost; cook frozen
Vegetables	8 Months	3–4 Days

Baking & Cooking

Product	Unopened in Pantry	Refrigerator After Opening	In Pantry After Opening
Baking powder	6–18 Months		3–6 Months
Baking soda	2–3 Years		6 Months
Biscuit or pancake mix	12 Months		Package use-by date
Cake, brownie, bread mixes	12–18 Months		Package use-by date
Chocolate, unsweetened and semi-sweet, solid	1–2 Years		1 Year
Cocoa and cocoa mixes	Indefinitely		1 Year
Cornmeal, regular	6–12 Months	1 Year	2 Years
Cornmeal, stone ground	1 Month	2–4 Months	Not recommended
Cornstarch	18–24 Months		18 Months

Extracts, vanilla, lemon, etc.	4 Years		4 Years
Flour, white	6–12 Months	1 Year	6–8 Months
Flour, whole wheat	3–6 Months	6–8 Months	
Frosting or icing	10–12 Months	2–3 Weeks	Check label
Gelatin, flavored	18 Months		Use entire packet; 3–4 Mos.
Gelatin, unflavored	3 Years		Use entire packet
Nut oils	6 Months		
Oils, olive or vegetable	6–12 Months	4 Months	3–5 Months
Shortening, solid	1–2 Years		6–12 Months
Sugar, brown	18 Months		Sugar never spoils
Sugar, confectioners	18 Months		Sugar never spoils

Sugar, granulated	2 Years		Sugar never spoils
Sugar substitutes	2 Years	Never spoils	
Tamarind paste	6–12 Months	2–3 Months	6 Months
Tapiocas	12 Months	12 Months	
Vegetable oil sprays	2 Years		1 Year
Yeast	See expiration date		

Product	Unopened in Pantry	In Pantry After Opening
Chili powder	2 Years total	2 Years
Flavored or herb mixes	6 Months	
Herbs, dried	1–2 Years	1–2 Years
Seasoning blends	1–2 Years	1–2 Years
Spice, ground	2–3 Years total	2–3 Years
Spices, whole	3–4 Years total	3–4 Years

Refrigerated Dough & Pasta

Product	Refrigerated	Frozen
Cookie dough	Package use-by date	6 Months
Fresh pasta, sold refrigerated	Package use-by date or 1–2 Days	6 Months
Ready-to-bake pie crust	Package use-by date	6 Months
Tube cans of biscuits, rolls, pizza dough, etc.	Package use-by date	Do not freeze

Condiments & Sauces

Product	Unopened in Pantry	Refrigerator After Opening
Barbecue sauce, bottled	12 Months	4 Months
Chutney	12 Months	1–2 Months
Dry cream sauce mixes	6–12 Months	
Dry gravy mixes	2 Years	1–2 Days
Gravy, jars and cans	2–5 Years	1–2 Days
Honey	2 Years*	
Horseradish, in jar	12 Months	3–4 Months
Jams, jellies and preserves	6–18 Months	6–12 Months
Ketchup, cocktail or chili sauce	12 Months	6 Months
Marinades	1 Year	6 Months
Mayonnaise, commercial	3–6 Months	For best quality: 2 Months
Mustard	1–2 Years	12 Months
Olives, black and green	12–18 Months	2 Weeks
Pickles	12 Months	1–3 Months
Pesto, jarred	6 Months	Refrigerator: 3 Days Freezer: 1 Month
Pesto, refrigerated		Unopened: 1 Week; Opened: 3 Days
Salad dressings, commercial, bottled	10–12 Months	1–3 Months
Salsa, picante and taco sauces	12 Months	1 Month

Sauce mixes, nondairy (spaghetti, taco, etc.)	2 Years	
Spaghetti sauce in jars	18 Months	4 Days
Soy sauce or teriyaki sauce	3 Years	1 Month
Vinegar	2 Years	1 Year
Worcestershire sauce	2 Years	1 Year

Shelf Stable Food—Baby Food

Product	Unopened in Pantry	Refrigerator After Opening	In Pantry after Opening
Baby food, jars or pouches	Package use-by date	2–3 Days	
Baby food, fruit	Package use-by date	3 Days	
Baby food, vegetables	Package use-by date	2 Days	
Baby food, dinners	Package use-by date	2 Days	
Baby food, cereal and dry mixes	Package use-by date	1–2 Months	2 Months
Formula, prepared	Package use-by date	24 Hours	1 Hour
Liquid concentrate or ready-to-feed formula	Package use-by date	48 Hours	

Shelf Stable Foods—Meat and Poultry

Product	Unopened in Pantry	Refrigerate after Opening
Bacon, fully cooked	Unopened, until the package use-by date	5–14 Days
Ham, shelf-stable cans	6–9 Months in the pantry	3–4 Days
Jerky, commercially dried	12 Months	2–3 Months
Jerky, homemade	1–2 Months	1–2 Months
Meat products, canned	5 Years	3–4 Days
Retort pouches or boxes	Use package recommendations	3–4 Days

Shelf Stable Foods—Other Items

Product	Unopened in Pantry	Refrigerator After Opening	In Pantry after Opening
Applesauce, commercial	12–18 Months	7–10 Days	Do not store in pantry after opening
Bacon bits, imitation	1 Year	Package use-by date	1 Year
Canned goods, low acid (such as meat, poultry, fish, gravy, stew, soups, beans, carrots, corn, pasta, peas, potatoes, spinach)	2–5 Years	3–4 Days	Do not store in pantry after opening
Canned goods, high acid (such as juices, fruit, pickles, sauerkraut, tomato soup, and foods in vinegar-based sauce)	12–18 Months	5–7 Days	Do not store in pantry after opening
Cereal, ready-to-eat	6–12 Months		2–3 Months

Shelf Stable Foods—Other Items (cont.)

Product	Unopened in Pantry	Refrigerator After Opening	In Pantry after Opening
Cereal, cook before eating (oatmeal, etc.)	12 Months		6–12 Months
Chocolate syrup	2 Years	6 Months	Not recommended
Crackers	8 Months	Refrigerator or freezer: 3–4 Months	1 Month
Garlic, chopped, commercial jars	8–12 Months	Refrigerate: package use-by date	
Graham crackers and animal crackers	6–9 Months		
Fruits, dried	6 Months	6 Months	1 Month
Gummy (fruit) snacks	6–9 Months		6 Months
Marshmallows	1 Year		1 Month
Marshmallow crème	2–5 Months		1 Month
Milk, canned evaporated or condensed	12 Months	4–5 Days	
Molasses	1–2 Years		6 Months
Mushrooms, dried	1–2 Years		3 Months
Nuts, jars or cans	12 Months	Refrigerator: 4–6 Months Freezer: 6–12 Months	2–9 Months
Peanut butter, commercial	6–24 Months		2–3 Months
Pectin	Package use-by date		1 Month
Popcorn, dry kernels in jar	2 Years		1 Year
Popcorn, commercially popped in bags	2–3 Months		1–2 Weeks
Popcorn, microwave packets	6–12 Months		1–2 Days popped
Potato chips	Package use-by date; 2 Months		1–2 Weeks
Potatoes, instant	10–15 Months		6–12 Months
Pretzels	4–9 Months		3 Weeks
Pudding mixes	12 Months		3–4 Months
Soup mixes, dry bouillon	12 Months		12 Months
Sun dried tomatoes	1 Year	3–6 Months	3–6 Months
Syrup, genuine or real maple	12 Months	6 Months	Not recommended
Syrup, pancake	12 Months	12 Months	12 Months
Toaster pastries	6–12 Months		1–2 Weeks

Beverages

Product	Unopened in Pantry	Refrigerator after Opening	In Pantry after Opening
Coffee, whole beans	3–5 Months	For all types, 3–4 Months	3–5 Months
Coffee, ground, non–vacuum	3–5 Months	Freezer: 1–2 Years	3–5 Weeks
Coffee, instant	12 Months		2–3 Months
Diet powder mixes and drink mixes	18–24 Months		1–3 Months
Juice, sold refrigerated		Package use-by date or 6–10 Days	
Juice, sold shelf stable (bottles, boxes or cans)	Package best-by date or 4–12 Months	Package use-by date or 8–12 Days	
Nectar such as papaya, mango, guava	12–18 Months	Refrigerator: 5-7 Days Freezer: 8-12 Months	
Soda such as carbonated cola drinks, mixers, diet sodas, bottles or cans	Package use-by date (about 3 months for bottles; 9 months for cans)	2–3 Days	2–3 Days
Soy or rice beverage	Refrigerator unopened: 6 Months	Refrigerator: 7-10 Days Freezer: 3 Months	
Soy or rice beverage, refrigerated	Refrigerator unopened: 6 Months	Refrigerator: 7-10 Days Freezer: 3 Months	
Tea, bags	18–36 Months		6–12 Months
Tea, instant	2–3 Years		6–12 Months
Tea, loose	2 Years	Matcha tea is the only tea that can be frozen after opening	6–12 Months
Water	1–2 Years	2 Weeks	3 Months