

Food Safety Label Understanding

This guide provides a clear explanation of the meanings behind common food safety labels, including 'best before', 'use-by', and 'sell-by' dates, emphasizing their significance in relation to food quality and safety.

Step 1: **Best Before**

Examine the 'best before' date, which indicates the date until which the product is expected to retain its best quality. After this date, the food may still be edible, but its flavor, texture, or nutritional value may not be optimal.

Step 2: **Use-By**

Check the 'use-by' date, which is critical for safety and is usually found on perishable items. Foods should not be consumed after this date as they may pose a health risk due to potential spoilage.

Step 3: **Sell-By**

Understand the 'sell-by' date, which is used by retailers to know how long to display a product for sale. This date is a guideline for the store, rather than a direct message to consumers, and products can usually be safely consumed after the sell-by date if stored properly.

Step 4: **Storage Guidance**

Follow any storage guidance on the label, such as 'keep refrigerated' or 'store in a cool, dry place.' Proper storage extends a product's life and ensures safety beyond the printed dates.

Step 5: **Review Labels**

Regularly review food labels in your pantry or refrigerator to ensure you are consuming foods within the recommended time frames and properly discarding items that are past their safe use dates.

General Notes

Safety First

When in doubt, if food looks, smells, or tastes off, regardless of the dates, discard it to avoid foodborne illness.

Regulation

Be aware that food labeling regulations can vary by country and region, affecting how dates are calculated and displayed.