

U.S FOOD LABEL MYSTERY # I SELL-BY

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Do I Throw it Out? Unveiling the Mystery Behind Food Sell-By-Labels

Bring your curiosity and questions about the sell-by-date label on packaged foods that you buy. Just what is it telling you?

Who regulates sell-by labels anyway? Do these labels make us waste edible food or do they help us avoid food-borne illness?

Conduct your own investigation by categorizing typical labels and sharing your results, using your senses to estimate "time to throw it out" and voting on suggested designs that ensure quality and safety while avoiding food waste.



Food and Drug Administration



The [Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#) is responsible for assuring that foods sold in the United States are safe, wholesome and properly labeled: domestically produced as well as foods from foreign countries.

The Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (FD&C Act) and the Fair Packaging and Labeling Act govern food products under FDA's jurisdiction. The Nutrition Labeling and Education Act (NLEA) requires that most foods have [nutrition labeling](#) and that nutrient content claims and certain health messages to comply with requirements



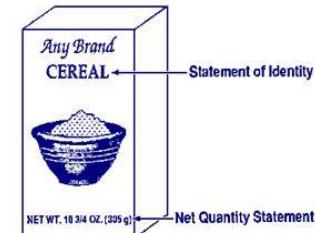
Principle Display Panel

The Principal Display Panel (PDP) contains the name of the food and the net quantity statement, which specifically states how much the package contains. It is the area of a package label where you are most likely to look.

The Information Panel is to the immediate right of the PDP and includes the name and address of the manufacturer, packer or distributor, the ingredient list, as well as nutrition labeling.

Principal Display Panel (PDP)

- The Principal Display Panel (PDP) is the primary side of the label that the consumer will view --- this is usually the front of the package
- Two required elements
 - Statement of Identity
(common or usual name of food)
 - Net Quantity Declaration



The Ingredient List

The ingredient list on a food label is the listing of each ingredient in descending order of predominance.

Even water that is added in the making of a food is considered an ingredient. A trace ingredient, or one that is present in a small amount, is listed if it is present in a significant amount and has a function in the finished food.

INGREDIENTS

Water, Carrots, Onions, Red Lentils (4.5%) Potatoes, Cauliflower, Leeks, Peas, Cornflower, **Wheat**flour, Cream (**milk**), Yeast Extract, Concentrated Tomato Paste, Garlic, Sugar, **Celery** Seed, Sunflower Oil, Herb and Spice, White Pepper, Parsley

ALLERGY ADVICE

For allergens, see ingredients in **bold**

Chemical Preservatives



The statement "may contain corn, soybean or peanut oil" is an example of an alternate listing that is used when the manufacturer is unable to predict which fat or oil ingredient will be used.

When an approved chemical preservative is added to a food, the ingredient list includes both the common or usual name of the preservative and the function of the preservative by including terms such as "preservative," "to retard spoilage," "a mold inhibitor," "to help protect flavor," or "to promote color retention."



Search ID: aba0049

"Now that I'm in midlife, I read all the food labels.
I can use all the preservatives I can get."

Food Allergy Warning

People with allergies check ingredient lists to determine if any substances they wish to avoid, such as peanuts or sulfate, are present.

Generally speaking, the first five ingredients make the greatest contribution and are present in the largest amount. For example, someone who wishes to limit intake of high fructose corn syrup might reconsider a food where it appears among the top ingredients.



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Nutrition Facts Label

A new look: increased size of calories, servings per contain, serving size along with bolded calories; actual amount declared for vitamin D, calcium, iron & potassium

Added sugars spelled out in grams

Vitamins A & C – voluntarily included

Calories from fat removed

Serving size “what likely eat not should eat”

Package size “what people eat in one sitting”

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 2/3 cup (55g)
Servings Per Container About 8

Amount Per Serving

Calories 230 Calories from Fat 72

Total Fat 8g **% Daily Value*** 12%

Saturated Fat 1g 5%

Trans Fat 0g

Cholesterol 0mg **% Daily Value*** 0%

Sodium 160mg 7%

Total Carbohydrate 37g 12%

Dietary Fiber 4g 16%

Sugars 12g

Protein 3g

Vitamin A 10%

Vitamin C 8%

Calcium 20%

Iron 45%

* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.
Your daily value may be higher or lower depending on
your calorie needs.

	Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Sat Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

Nutrition Facts

8 servings per container

Serving size 2/3 cup (55g)

Amount per serving

Calories 230 **% Daily Value***

Total Fat 8g **10%**

Saturated Fat 1g 5%

Trans Fat 0g

Cholesterol 0mg **0%**

Sodium 160mg 7%

Total Carbohydrate 37g 13%

Dietary Fiber 4g 14%

Total Sugars 12g

Includes 10g Added Sugars 20%

Protein 3g

Vitamin D 2mcg 10%

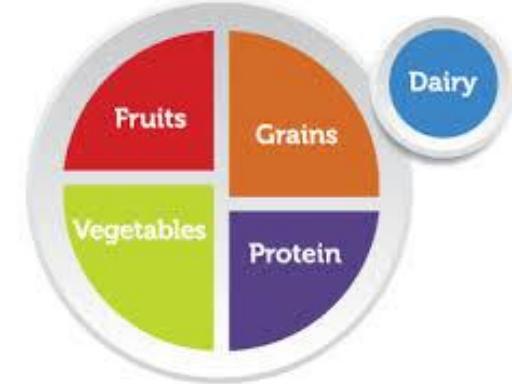
Calcium 260mg 20%

Iron 8mg 45%

Potassium 235mg 6%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in
a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories
a day is used for general nutrition advice.

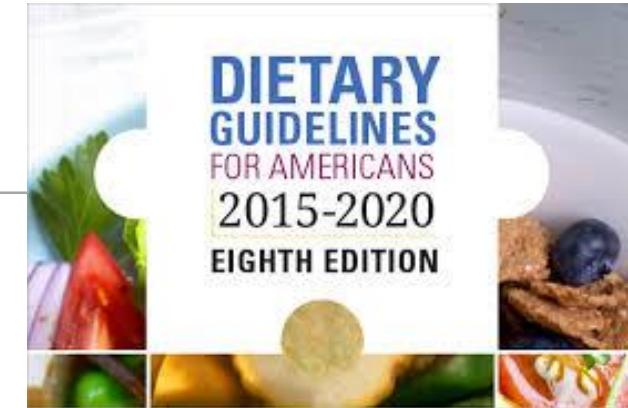
Eating Healthy – Labels Help



The Percent Daily Value (%DV) indicates the contribution that the product makes to a 2,000-Calorie diet. For some people, this is too many Calories; for others, too few. A **percent of five or less** indicates that the product is low in a particular nutrient; **one of 20% or more** indicates that it is high.

Moderation, Balance, and Variety in your eating habits is challenging with so many choices. How do you begin? Start by choosing foods that are nutrient-dense. These foods offer substantial nutritional benefit without adding unneeded Calories, saturated fat and trans fats, cholesterol, added sugars, salt, or alcohol. Guides for adopting a balanced eating pattern include the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) MyPlate or the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) Eating Plan.

Nutrition Facts Pointers



Look for products that contain **less than 5 grams of fat per serving** with no trans fats. Limit consumption of fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol.

If the food is made with grains, such as breads and cereals, look for a **minimum of 3 grams of fiber** per serving with a goal of 25-30 grams per day. In this case, more is better!

Compare sugar to carbohydrate total. **If over half** the grams of carbohydrate are provided by sugar, **limit use** of the product - it contains too much sugar. The less, the better!

Limit daily intake of sodium. Moderate consumption of food or drink containing more than 150 milligrams of sodium. Sodium is found in almost everything, even water, and daily intake should not exceed 2,300 milligrams. **Avoid any one food that has too much sodium**, or make it a once-in-a-while treat. ([U.S Dietary Guidelines](#))

U.S.D.A and Product Dating

For meat, poultry, and egg products under the jurisdiction of the [Food Safety and Inspection Service \(FSIS\)](#), dates may be voluntarily provided if they are labeled in a truthful manner, not misleading and meet regulations

A **calendar date** must express both the month and day of the month. In the case of shelf-stable and frozen products, the year must also be displayed. Additionally, immediately adjacent to the date must be a phrase explaining the meaning of that date such as "Best if Used By."



Food Product Dating

Two types of product dating may be on a label. "**Open Dating**" a calendar date applied by the manufacturer or retailer. It provides consumers with information on the estimated period of time for which the product is of best quality. It also helps the store know how long to display the product for sale.

"**Closed Dating**" is a code that consists of a series of letters and/or numbers applied by manufacturers to identify the date and time of production.



**Closed Food
Product Dating**



**Open Food
Product Dating**

Product Dating

Open Dating on an Egg Carton

Open dating is found on most foods including meat, poultry, egg and dairy products. "Closed or coded dates" are a series of letters and/or numbers and typically appear on shelf-stable products such as cans and boxes of food.

There are no uniform or universally accepted descriptions used on food labels for **open dating** in the United States. As a result, there are a wide variety of phrases used on labels to describe quality dates.



Canned Foods Dating

Packing codes are a type of **closed dating** for tracking in interstate commerce. They enable manufacturers to rotate stock and locate products in the event of a recall. Codes appear as a series of letters and/or numbers and refer to the date the product was canned. The codes are not meant for the consumer to interpret as a "Best if Used By" date.

Cans may also display "open" or calendar dates. Usually these are "Best if Used By" dates for peak quality.



Food Safety or Quality?

Manufacturers provide dating 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** and are not required by Federal law

The length of time and the temperature at which a food is held during distribution and offered for sale, the characteristics of the food, and the type of packaging will affect how long a product will be of optimum quality.



Signs of Spoiled Food



**25% of the
world's food supply
is lost to spoilage.**

Spoiled foods will develop an off odor, flavor or texture due to naturally occurring spoilage bacteria. Microorganisms such as molds, yeasts, and bacteria multiply and cause food to spoil. Viruses are not capable of growing in food and do not cause spoilage.

There are two types of bacteria that can be found on food: pathogenic bacteria, which cause foodborne illness, and spoilage bacteria, which cause foods to deteriorate and develop unpleasant characteristics such as an undesirable taste or odor making the food not wholesome, but do not cause illness.

When spoilage bacteria have nutrients (food), moisture, time, and favorable temperatures, these conditions will allow the bacteria to grow rapidly and affect the quality of the food. Food spoilage can occur much faster if it is not stored or handled properly. A change in the color of meat or poultry is not an indicator of spoilage

Date Label Confusion

To reduce food waste, it is important to understand that the dates applied to food are for **quality** and not for **safety**.

Food products are safe to consume **past the date** on the label, and regardless of the date, consumers should evaluate the safety of a food product prior to its consumption.



**TRASHING ONE EGG WASTES
55 GALLONS OF WATER**

COOK IT, STORE IT, SHARE IT.

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Date Labeling and Food Waste

USDA estimates 30 percent of the food supply is wasted at the retail and consumer levels.

One cause is consumers or retailers throwing away wholesome food because of confusion about the meaning of dates on the label. FSIS recommends that food manufacturers and retailers use "**Best if Used By**"

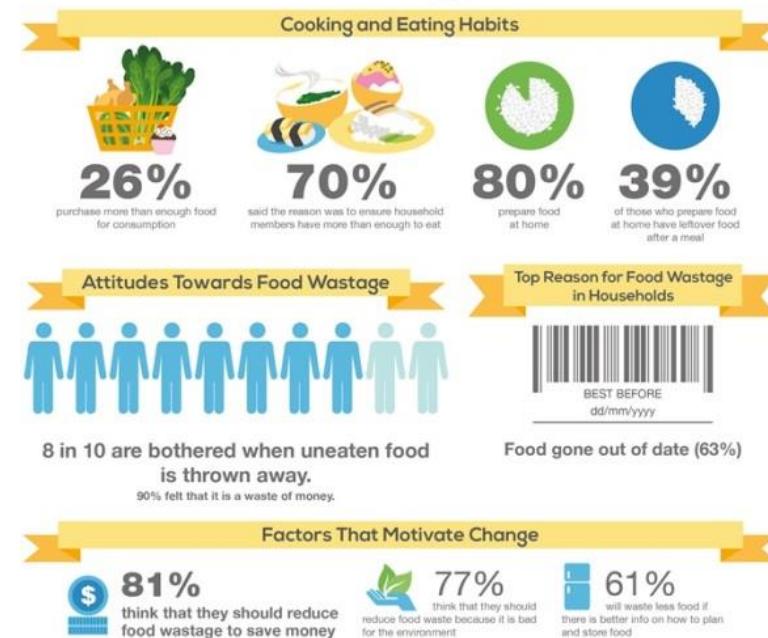
This phrase conveys that the product is of best quality if used by the calendar date shown. Foods not exhibiting signs of spoilage should be wholesome and may be sold, purchased, donated and consumed beyond the labeled "**Best if Used By**" date.

National Environment Agency & Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority

Consumer Survey on Food Wastage

In September 2014, the National Environment Agency (NEA) and Agri-Food Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA) commissioned a survey to find out the consumer perceptions, behaviour and attitudes towards food wastage.

From January to July 2015, a survey and focus group discussion, sampling of over 1,000 respondents, were carried out.



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