

SHELF LIFE



Shelf life non-negotiables

All packaged or processed products must have a shelf-life.

Any product cut and/or wrapped instore must be labelled with a sell by date and price – on the day of packing.

All products must be displayed until the close of business on the day as indicated by the sell by date.

Remove any products that do not visually comply to our quality standards, **irrespective** of the sell by date.

The “best before date” or “use by date” refers to the date by which the customer must use the product.

No sell-by date may be erased, removed, altered or replaced (stuck over or double labelled).

To ensure that shelf-life is attained, we:

- Buy from reliable sources.
- Specify and check good distribution practices.
- Ensure good receiving practices.
- Insist on excellent, safe, food handling at store level.
- Do not use expired product when preparing “Fresh Products” in our service departments.

All food products, except for products listed in Annexure 4 below from the Foodstuffs and Cosmetics Act, must have a sell by and best before or use by date.

ANNEXURE 4

List of foodstuffs and ingredients exempted from a date of durability

- Any alcoholic beverage as described in the Liquor Products Act, 1989 (Act 60 of 1989)
- Chewing gum
- Confectionary products consisting of flavoured and/or coloured sugars
- Fresh fruits and vegetables which have not been peeled or cut or similarly treated
- Processed meat products such as biltong and dried sausage which have not been pre-packed
- Honey, except for the date the honey was pre-packed
- Ready-to-eat flour confectionary, provided that the date of manufacture is indicated on the label or in the direct vicinity where the products are displayed

The shelf-life of a product is scientifically calculated via sensory and microbiological analysis. The “best before” or “use by date” refers to the date that the customer must use the product by. After this date the product quality and safety cannot be guaranteed.

Should a product not attain the prescribed shelf-life at retail level this is usually attributed to the following:

- Buying from an unreliable source
- Poor distribution practices
- Poor receiving practices
- Poor handling at store level (temperature abuse)
- Shelf-life tests were inaccurate and unreliable

If a product shows any physical signs of deterioration before the indicated sell by date:

- The store owner/manager must investigate any possible handling reason for this quality deterioration e.g.: temperature abuse.
- The product must be removed from sale. If the product is private label or via DC, the DC buyer and technologist must be informed.
- If the product is to be consumed on the day of purchase e.g. sandwiches, it need not carry a best before or use by date but must have a sell by date.

No expired stock may be re-packed in this way.

Unlabelled stock may not be kept in the back-up until required.

What is expired stock

Bearing in mind that the shelf-life of a product is calculated on microbiological testing, the product may appear to still be physically sound, but may be microbiologically unfit for human consumption. A danger exists by offering expired product for human consumption.

No person at SPAR may decide that an expired product is still fit to consume and take the risk of selling or “re-working” the product in any way.

Expired food products must be destroyed and not re-sold or donated to charity. One of the dangers of donating expired high risk products (e.g. prepared foods, protein based) to charity is that it often goes to people who are immunologically compromised e.g. people who are ill, young children, physically weak or elderly. These people are more susceptible to food poisoning. SPAR retailer can be made liable should food poisoning occur.

The use of products for re-working/re-processing is generally not allowed, the exceptions are:

HMR - Grilled Chicken

At the end of the day the grilled chicken from the deli may be covered, labelled (product and date) and chilled for use in sandwiches and salads for the following day (if it was not in the chicken warmer longer than 4 Hours).

Cheese

Cheese that has reached the sell by date must be removed from sale, but may be used e.g. in salads and sandwiches, within the best before date, on condition that the cold chain has been maintained, the packaging has not been damaged and the product quality is good. Minor quality imperfections may be removed/trimmed before the cheese is used.

NOTE

Expired or damaged product may not be grated and relabelled and sold: it may be used on the day e.g. on sandwiches and subs.

Fish

Fresh fish on the slab - the following shelf life only applies if the fish has been sufficiently iced during transit, in the back up chiller and on the slab. Date mark all product or containers (fresh or frozen) on day of receipt. Total 2 days' shelf-life on slab (if fish has been correctly iced on table with 70% crushed ice coverage). End of day 2 - fillet and vacuum pack the fish or cook the fish and give to customers as tasters. This is with the exception of the Cape Yellowtail fish.

The Cape Yellowtail in South Africa is involved in most cases of scombroid poisoning (also known as histamine food poisoning). This is caused by the consumption of "spoiled fish" which has undergone inappropriate storage or processing, specifically temperature abuse. Some kinds of fish contain naturally high levels of the chemical histidine. This chemical can be converted to histamine by bacterial growth. Cooking, smoking or freezing does not eliminate the histamine.



Prepacked fresh fish has a minimum of 2 days' shelf-life, provided that the fish has been stored and displayed under 5°C. Note, the display of prepacked fish in a foam tray on the ice slab is not effective as the core temperature of 5°C is not achievable.

Cooked fish has a 1 day shelf-life - therefore it must be sold and consumed on the day of cooking.

Frozen fish - place frozen fish on the slab or defrost in the chiller for 24 hours (never leave at room temperature or in water). Frozen fish must only be defrosted once (never re-freeze).

Bakery and rolls (not confectionery)

Bread rolls must be dried and crumbed within 24 hours. Products for this purpose, must be inside a clean container and covered, labelled (product and date) and stored in a dedicated area. Garlic bread may be made from one day old French loaves and have an additional four day shelf-life if displayed in the fridge.

**Butchery**

In some stores, meat and meat products are being processed and reworked into pet food. Pet food falls within the definition of animal feed and is regulated by the Department of Agriculture. Details can be found in the Fertilizer, Farm Feeds, Agricultural Remedies and Stock Remedies Act, 1947.

The Act is clear in highlighting animal feed risks around mycotoxins, heavy metals, dioxins, denatured oils, pesticides and salmonella. Pet food made in store must not be made using expired products.

All animal feed processed instore falls under the labelling legislation which includes specific labelling for products containing specific protein sources, GMO's, medication and other additives.

As part of the food safety system, all producers and retailers of animal feed must have a traceability system in place that allows for the efficient recall in the event of a food/feed safety incident which can be directly linked to the animal feed.

**Produce**

Produce at the end of "sell by date" but before the "best before" or "use by date" may be used in e.g. salads, preparation of hot foods, sandwiches and cut fruit.

These products must be:

1. Handled as per any other fresh product e.g. cold chain maintained and covered.
2. Stored in a dedicated area in the back-up chiller or preparation fridge in the department to avoid confusion with stock for display or stock that must be destroyed. This area must have clear signage to this effect.

Waste and disposal of food waste

Waste must be removed from the sales area immediately and not placed in any position where it can be possibly confused with fresh stock or stock that is still fit for sale.

No expired stock or waste may be left unattended in the fresh foods area at any time.

Waste must be removed from the shop floor before trading commences and be recorded in the back up area. Waste products must be stored in a dedicated area that is clearly signed for this purpose.

Waste product must be stored, covered and preferably in a sealed plastic bag. It is best to keep waste at a chilled temperature to avoid further deterioration, prevent contamination, odours, spillages and attracting of pests. If a large amount of perishable waste is stored, it is best to freeze the product (in a demarcated area) until it can be disposed of.

If a supplier does not collect the product as returned goods, the disposal of food waste must be done in such a way that the food cannot be misused for human consumption.

Condemned waste must be disposed of through the local municipality. The municipality must provide you with a pick-up slip that indicates the weight of the products. This is mainly for meat products. Wet waste can be discarded as per normal. Documents should be store for 1 year + the shelf-life of the product.

What happens to a product that a customer has returned to the store?

Dry Goods

1. Always check the shelf-life of the product. If expired, place in return area/waste area immediately.
2. Long-life grocery product;
 - Inspect product e.g. Dented cans, damaged packaging, visible inclusions.
 - If the product is still within shelf-life and packaging is still 100% intact, then the product may be returned to display.

Perishable product

1. An ambient display perishable product may be returned to display, provided the packaging is still intact and in good condition.
2. Loose sell, ambient produce may be returned to display for sale if in good condition.
3. Heated, frozen or chilled product must be written off as waste. It is difficult to determine the length of time the product has been temperature abused hence all perishable product returned, even within shelf-life, must be discarded. At no time, irrespective of the condition of the food, may it be placed back on display for sale.

Follow customer complaint procedure found in the form section.