**Donation Guidelines**

The Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County is a non-profit 501(c)3 charitable organization feeding over 200,000 people each month through our network of over 400 local charities. Your donations are protected under the Good Samaritan Law and may be tax deductible. Each time you donate, you help our mission by providing food and personal care items which are unsellable due to various reasons, but are still safe for consumption. These food items may be close to code date, dented cans, mislabeled products, overstock, etc.

We kindly request that you keep these guidelines in mind when making a donation.

**Discard if:**

Insect infested, moldy

Bulges, leaks, broken seals

Freezer burn, Odoriferous

Seal is broken

Insect Infected, stale

Seal is broken

Moldy/Odoriferous

Mold is visible

Cracked

Seal is broken

After used by date

Unless otherwise specified on the package by the manufacturer

**Life Past Code Date**

2 years

1 – 3 years

1 year

1 year

6 months – 2 years

1 – 4 weeks Past Code

1 – 2 weeks

3 – 10 days

1 week

6 months

USE BY DATE

USE BY DATE

**Product**

Rice, Pasta Beans

Cans/Bottles/Aseptic Pkgs

Frozen Products

Non-Refrigerated Juices

Crackers, Cereal

Refrigerated Juices/Tea

Yogurt

Bread/Bakery Products

Eggs

Baby Food in Jars

Infant Formula

Prepared Foods

**Interpreting Label Dates**

This handy reference guide is a suggestion based on federal health standards. ALWAYS use your best judgment when giving away food- if you are in doubt, throw it out! This is simply the maximum time the food product is considered safe.

**Expiration or “Use By” Date:** Last day the product should be eaten or used for assured quality.

* Phrase most often: “Do not use after (date).”
* Includes baby formula and baby foods

**Freshness or “Sell by Date”:** Last recommended date of sale that allows ample home storage time.

* Phrase most often used: “Sell by (date).”
* Includes milk, yogurt, and eggs

**“Best if used by” Date:** Date after which a product is not likely to be at peak quality or flavor.

* Includes prepared packaged foods, rice/soy cream, and most dry goods

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Product** | **Throw Out After** |
| Milk | 4-7 days past stamped date |
| Yogurt | 7-10 days past stamped date |
| Soft Cheese | 1 week past stamped date |
| Hard Cheeses | 3-4 weeks past stamped date |
| Luncheon Meat | 4-6 days unopened, 3-5 days if opened |
| Powdered Milk | 6 months past date if refrigerated |
| Eggs | 3-5 weeks past stamped date |
| Dry Cereal | 6-12 months unopened |
| Food in Jars | 12 months past stamped date |
| Canned Foods: Acidic (tomato products) | 12 months |
| Canned Foods: Non-Acidic | 3 years |
| Bread Products | 7 days after date if refrigerated at first |
| Rice/Pasta (dry) | 1 year after receiving |

\*Please not that all refrigerated products must be kept at 40 degrees F or cooler at all times. Freezers must be kept at 0 degrees F.

**Perishable Donation Handling and Storage Guidelines**

**Meat, Pork, Poultry, Fish**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Acceptable condition:** | **Handling and storage:** | **Non-acceptable condition:** |
| * Product should be in original packaging. * Food grade packaging in direct contact with food. * Securely closed and separated by category (e.g., beef, pork, poultry, fish) to avoid cross contamination. * Labeled and dated as appropriate. | * Product should be frozen on or before the expiration date. * Product should be stored at 0° F or less while awaiting pickup. Under no circumstances can the product be stored in excess of 41° F. | * Food kept between 41o and 135o for more than 2 hours. * Non-food grade packaging in direct contact with food. * Damaged or compromised packaging resulting in discoloration of product. * Defrosted product or product with severe freezer burn. |
|  | **Dairy Products** |  |
| **Acceptable condition:** | **Handling and storage:** | **Non-acceptable condition:** |
| * Product should be in original packaging. * Food grade packaging in direct contact with food.. | * Refrigerated product must be stored at 41° F or less while awaiting pickup. * Store frozen, product at 0°or less while awaiting pickup (never in excess of 41° F). | * Damaged or compromised packaging resulting in the loss of sanitary barrier protection. |

**Fresh Produce**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Acceptable condition:** | **Handling and storage:** | **Non-acceptable condition:** |
| * Product should be in original packaging and bags or food grade packaging (produce boxes) for all repacked product. * Cut produce should be securely closed in food grade packaging with each vegetable or fruit packaged separately | * Store in a cool, dry, clean area. * Whole produce can be stored at room temperature. * Cut produce must be stored at 41° F or less. | * Signs of decay. |

**Baked Goods**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Acceptable condition:** | **Handling and storage:** | **Non-acceptable condition:** |
| * Fresh, day-old bread, bagels, and other bakery items. * Food grade packaging in direct contact with food securely closed. * Bread product separately packaged from other baked goods | * Store in a cool, dry, clean area. | * Mold, damaged or compromised packaging resulting in loss of the sanitary barrier protection. * Product not in food grade packaging. |

**Product Requirements**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Meat**  **(all meat must be frozen on or before the expiration date)** | | | |
| **Product:** | **Requirement and expiration/code dates:** | | **Non-acceptable condition:** |
| Fresh or frozen meats, processed, packaged meats | Freeze at 0º F or below on/before expiration date.  If frozen on/before expiration date, can be consumed up to one year past expiration. | | * Defrosted product * Severe freezer burn * Discolored product * Unfrozen past expiration date * Damaged or compromised packaging. |
| Processed fully cooked meats. | Defrosting/refreezing is strictly prohibited.  If frozen on/before expiration date, can be consumed up to one year past expiration. | |
| **Dairy** | | | |
| **Product:** | **Requirement and expiration/code dates:** | | **Non-acceptable condition:** |
| * Milk * Yogurt * Sour Cream * Cottage Cheese * Cheese Products * Eggs * Butter Products | Chill below 41º F. | | Damaged or compromised packaging, off odor, discoloration. |
| **Type:** | **Can consume …** |
| Half and Half | 3 days past expiration |
| Whipping cream |
| Egg nog | 5 days past expiration |
| Whole milk |
| 2% milk | 6 days past expiration |
| 1% milk | 7 days past expiration |
| Kefir (fermented milk) |
| Skim milk | 10 days past expiration |
| Buttermilk |
| Yogurt, sour cream, cottage cheese, cream cheese | 14 days past expiration | Mold, off color or smell. |
| Processed Cheese Slices | 1 month past expiration | Opened items, compromised packaging.  Mold, off color or smell.  Opened items, compromised packaging.  Mold, off color or smell. |
| Hard Cheese (cheddar, swiss, parmesan) | 21 days past expiration |
| Soft Cheese(brie, ricotta): | 7 days past expiration |
| Eggs | * In shell: 21 days * Hard cooked: 7 days * Pasteurized: 10 days * Substitute: 10 days | Damaged or compromised packaging, off odor, taste, discoloration. |
| Butter | 1 month past expiration |
| Margarine | 6 months past expiration |
| **Alternative Dairy and Meat Overview** | | | |
| **Product:** | **Requirement:** | | **Non-acceptable condition:** |
| Soy yogurt and milk | Refrigerate below 41º F.   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Soy …** | **Consume …** | | Milk | 7 days past expiration | | Yogurt | 14 days past expiration | | | Damaged/compromised packaging, off odor, discoloration. |
| Meat substitutes such as Tofu, Tempeh and Seitan | Must be frozen at 0°F or below on/before expiration date. All other substitutes must be refrigerated below 41° F.   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **If …** | **Consume up to …** | | Refrigerated | Expiration date. | | Frozen on/before expiration date | 1 year past expiration | | | Damaged/compromised packaging, un-frozen past expiration date, swollen/bulging container. |
| Non-Dairy Beverages (rice, soy, oat milk) | If stored properly, can be consumed up to 6 months past expiration date. Store in cool, dry, clean area. | | Damaged/compromised packaging, off odor or discoloration. |
| **Bakery** | | | |
| **Product:** | **Requirement and expiration/code dates:** | | **Non-acceptable condition:** |
| Bread | Should be consumed fresh or up to 1 day past expiration date, and stored in cool, dry, area. Package into banana boxes, separate bread from other foods/products. | | * Dried out or stale products * Molded products * Hard bread items (i.e., old baguettes). |
| Pastries | Should be consumed up to 2 days past expiration date, and stored in cool, dry, area. | | * Dried out or stale products. * Molded products. |
| Non-Shelf Stable Bakery (such as cream pies) | Must be kept below 41° F and consumed within 4 days of expiration date. | | * Items in open containers. * Product left out of refrigeration. |
| **Dry and Canned Goods** | | | |
| **Product:** | **Requirement:** | | **Non-acceptable condition:** |
| Cereal | Must contain a label including a description of item, ingredients, net weight, and distributor. | | * Insects * Mold * Stale product * Damaged or compromised packaging * Not packaged in food grade packaging. |
| Coffee | Can be consumed up to 3 weeks after expiration. | |
| Crackers | Must contain a label including a description of item, ingredients, net weight, and distributor. | |
| Dried beans | Store in a well-ventilated and climate controlled area.  Must contain a label including a description of item, ingredients, net weight, and distributor.  Can be consumed up to 3 years past expiration. | |
| Pasta |
| Mayonnaise (shelf-stable) | Store in a well-ventilated and climate controlled area.  Can be consumed up to 3 years past expiration. | | * Leaking jars * Open * Broken seal * Discolored * Off odor |
| Refrigerated dressing/mayonnaise | Store in a well-ventilated and climate controlled area.  Discard product if discolored or it has an off odor. If stored correctly, can be consumed up to 3 months past expiration date | |
| Shelf-stable jarred foods | Store in a cool, dry, clean area. Labels on original jars and/or cases should be fully intact. They must include a description of item, ingredients, net weight, and distributor. | | * Opened, punctured, or bulging jar top. * Broken seal (button indicator identifies break in seal). * Visible signs of leakage or spoilage. * Broken or chipped glass. |
| Baby food | Use by date |
| Formula |
| Canned Goods, Low Acid (gravy, soup, pasta, beans) | 2 years past expiration |
| Canned Goods, High Acid (tomato, fruits, vinegar based sauces) | 1 year past expiration |
| Cereal/Oatmeal |
| Condiments (ketchup, mustard, barbeque sauce, pickles, olives, honey, chutney, horseradish, molasses, jam, jelly, ) |
| **Frozen Foods** | | | |
| **Product:** | **Requirement:** | | **Non-acceptable condition:** |
| Frozen food items (TV dinners, vegetables, ice cream, sorbet, fruit, bagels) | If stored and frozen properly, these items may be consumed up to 3 months after expiration. | | * Product left out of freezer. * Items in open containers. * Damaged or compromised packaging |