

Use-by / Best-before dates

Use-by date

“Use-by” dates are the most important dates for people to consider, as these relate to **food safety**. Food is **suitable for consumption before this date**, but not after. Most food types concerned are fresh and chilled foods; such as raw meat, poultry, fish, eggs, milk, fruit and vegetables.



Photo Credit: [Love Food Hate Waste](#)

If you have food approaching its 'use by' date, you have **two options**:

- ✓ Cook it on its use-by date and then eat it or store it in the fridge (up to 2 days)
- ✓ Freeze it before its use-by date and then cook it within 24 hours of defrosting

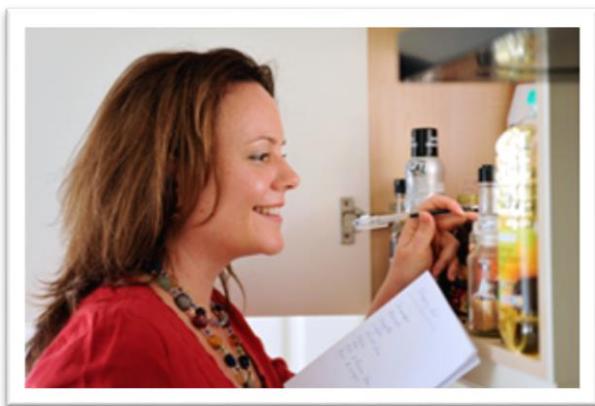


Photo Credit: [Recycle for Wales](#)

Display until/Sell by

Food labels such as “Display until...” and “Sell by...” are instructions for shop staff, not for shoppers. They are mainly used for stock control purposes.

Best before date

“Best before” dates relate to food quality including taste, texture and appearance.

Eating food past its “best before” date is unlikely to be harmful if the product has been stored properly and the packaging is not damaged, but maybe the product is not at its best quality.

Nevertheless, **consumption** of these products is **under the consumers’ responsibility**. There are some premises that should be observed: meat and fish labels should be strictly respected and these products should never be eaten after their use-by date. Other products like bread, fruits and vegetables or dairy products might still be good however.

Smelling or tasting a small amount of these products prevents from throwing away food that is still in good shape.

TIPS TO REDUCE FOOD WASTE

How can I know if my food is still eatable?

In many cases, smelling or tasting a small amount can prevent from throwing away food that is still good to eat. However, for safety reasons, foods labelled with a "use by" date should not be eaten after their expiry date.

Smelling or tasting a small amount of these products prevents from throwing away food that is still in good shape

- ✓ **Dairy products** such as milk, cheese or mayonnaise smell when they are passed. If they taste sour they are not suitable for consumption.
- ✓ **Cheese:** If some mushrooms appear in the surface of your cheese, you can easily remove them with a knife. But to avoid this from happening, cheese is better preserved in an air tight container.
- ✓ **Eggs** are usually labelled with a code that includes their "best before" date. Otherwise, there is an easy tip to check their freshness. Fill in a glass with tap water and gently place the egg inside of it. If the egg sinks to the bottom, it means it is in its best. If it stays in the middle it should be consumed within 1 or 2 days. But if the egg floats, it is passed and it should not be consumed.
- ✓ **Cold meat and bacon** can get dry if not well stored. They might not look good because of oxidation, but if they smell nice they are suitable for consumption.
- ✓ **Soups and stews** are only eatable if they still smell and taste good.
- ✓ **Cooked food leftovers** stay in the fridge for 1 to 3 days if stored in airtight containers. However, smelling and trying them before serving is always



Photo Credit: storingandfreezing.co.uk

Main source: Love Food Hate Waste (<http://england.lovefoodhatewaste.com/content/date-labels-infographic>)

More information:

- ec.europa.eu/food/food/sustainability/docs/best_before_en.pdf
- vimeo.com/42328528