

Fremont County School District #38



Totes for Hope

There are hundreds of children in Wyoming who rely on the Totes of Hope Program. This program works in conjunction with after-school programs to ensure that children at risk of hunger have access to enough food to get them through weekends when they lack access to school meal programs.

Each Friday during the school year, participating children receive a nondescript tote containing easy-to-prepare, child-friendly food to help sustain a family of four through the weekend. Among some of the items are; cereal, granola bars, shelf-stable milk, tuna, peanut butter, jelly, canned soup, boxed meals, mac and cheese, canned vegetables and fruit.

The food we send home is safe!



FCSD #38's Totes for Hope program receives food items from the Wyoming Food Bank of the Rockies. The Wyoming Food Bank of the Rockies distributes food items after the date on the package. **This food is still safe to eat!** Food manufacturers use different date codes to ensure that consumers receive their product at peak quality. Once a product is past code date, many manufacturers donate it to food banks. Food Bank staff monitors this food to ensure that the quality remains good. This provides a reference for the "shelf life" of this product, or how long these foods are good past code date.

Should you have any questions, call Nena Brown at (307) 856-9333 x 197, or email at nenabrown@fremont38.com with your questions and/or concerns.



We have included a "Shelf Life of Food Bank Products" guide for your convenience.

How to use this guide:

The first section of the guide provides a brief introduction to how manufacturers use dates to code their food for purchase. Then, the guide offers a series of charts that offer guidance on how long different foods can be safely consumed past the date stamped on the packaging.

Shelf Life of Food Bank Products

- **Shelf-Stable Foods:** anything that can be stored at room temperature before opening. This category includes baby foods, condiments, canned goods, and dry goods.
- **Shelf-Stable Beverages:** Juices, soda, water, and other drinks designed to be stored at room temperature until opening. Not to be confused with beverages that must be kept refrigerated.

What do the Dates on Food Packages and Medicines Mean?

The only foods that are required by federal law to have expiration dates are baby food, infant formula, and over-the-counter medications. No medicines should be distributed after the expiration date. The Food Bank does not distribute most baby food past its expiration date. However, some products designed for babies such as juice and cookies or biscuits can be distributed past their date and are safe to eat.

Many canned and boxed products are safe to eat long after the date on the container, and the shelf life of refrigerated and frozen foods can be extended if they are handled properly. Once a perishable item is frozen, it doesn't matter if the date expires—foods kept frozen continuously are safe indefinitely, though the quality slowly deteriorates over time. Here are some code dates you may see on food packages:

“Expiration Date” (Examples: “Expires 11/15/11” or “Do not use after 11/15/11”)

- **Look for it on:** Baby food and formula, medicines, vitamins, yeast, baking powder.
- **What it means:** Do not distribute infant formula, baby food, vitamins, or medicines after the expiration date! Yeast and baking powder work less well after expiration but are safe to eat.

“Pack Date” (Examples: “Packed on 03/01/2012” or “22:5306412” or “KL064”)

- **Look for it on:** Canned food, crackers, cookies, spices.
- **What it means:** This is the date the food was packaged. A code is often used that cannot be understood by the general public, often numbering days sequentially such that January 1 is day 001 and December 31 is day 365 (366 in leap years). Usually this food is of good quality and safe to eat for a long time past the date.

“Sell By” Date (Example: “Sell by January 1, 2012”. Also called “Pull Date”)

- **Look for it on:** Refrigerated foods such as milk, yogurt, cottage cheese, eggs, lunch meat, packaged salad mixes.
- **What it means:** The store must sell these foods before the code date listed and often donates these foods when they are close to date. If the food has been handled properly it is still safe to eat and the quality is good. Food bank staff monitors this food to ensure that the quality remains good.

“Use By” or Quality Date (Examples: “Best if used by 1/1/12” or “Use Before 1/1/12”)

- **Look for it on:** Crackers, cookies, cold cereals, and other dry, shelf stable food.
- **What it means:** This date is the manufacturer's recommendation for how long the food will be at peak quality. After the quality date, the food is still safe to eat but slowly begins to lose nutrients and the quality begins to lessen.



Shelf-Stable Foods	Shelf Life After Code Date
Canned Foods	
Beans	3 years
Fish: salmon, tuna, sardines, mackerel	3 years
Frosting, canned	10 months
High-acid foods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fruit (including applesauce, juices) • pickles, sauerkraut • baked beans w/ mustard/ vinegar • tomatoes, tomato-based soups & sauces 	1-2 years
Low-acid foods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gravy, soups/ broths that aren't tomato-based • pasta, stews, cream sauces • vegetables (not tomatoes) 	2-3 years
Meat: beef, chicken, pork, turkey	2-3 years
Pie filling	3 years
Aseptically-packaged Products	
UHT Milk	1 year
Broth: beef, chicken, or vegetable	3 years
Soup	3 years
Fruits	3 years
Vegetables	3 years
Condiments, Sauces, Syrups	
Barbecue sauce (bottled)	1 year
Frosting, canned	10 months
Gravy (dry mix envelopes)	2 years
Honey	2 years--remains safe after crystallization. To use, simply immerse closed container in hot (not boiling) water until honey liquefies
Jams, jellies, preserves	18 months
Ketchup, cocktail, or chili sauce: jar, bottle, or packet	18 months
Mayonnaise: jar, bottle, or packet	3-6 months
Molasses	2 years
Mustard: jar, bottle, or packet	2 years
Olives	18-24 months
Pickles	1 year, canned 2 years, jarred--discard if inside of lid is rusty upon opening
Salad dressings: bottled	1 year
Salsa: bottled	12-18 months

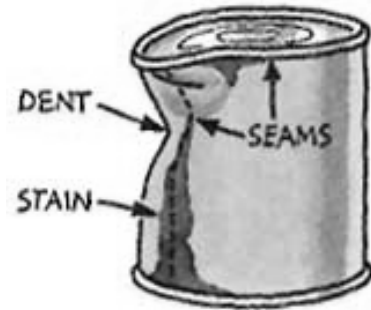
Shelf-Stable Foods (Continued)	Shelf Life After Code Date
Condiments, Sauces, Syrups (Continued)	
Spaghetti sauce, canned	18 months
Spaghetti sauce, jarred	18 months
Syrup, chocolate	2 years
Syrup, corn	2 years
Syrup, pancake	2 years
Vinegar	2 years
Worcestershire sauce	2 years
Dry Goods	
Baking mix, pancake	9 months
Baking mixes (brownie, cake, muffin, etc.)	12-18 months
Baking powder	18 months
Baking soda	indefinite if kept dry
Beans, dried	1 year
Bouillon: beef or chicken	12-24 months
Bouillon: vegetable	12-24 months
Bread, commercially prepared (including rolls)	3-5 days at room temp 3 months stored frozen
Cakes, commercially prepared	2-4 days at room temp several months frozen
Candy (all, including chocolate)	9 months, caramel 18 months, chocolate 36 months, hard candy
Casserole Mix	9-12 months
Cereal, cold	1 year
Cereal, hot	1 year
Cookies	4 months
Cornmeal	1 year at room temp 2+ years frozen
Crackers	8 months except graham crackers, 2 months
Flour, white (all purpose or cake)	1 year
Flour, whole wheat	6 months keeps longer if refrigerated or frozen
Fruit, dried	6 months
Macaroni and Cheese, mix	9-12 months
Nuts, out of shell	6-12 months, bagged 12-24 months, canned
Nuts, in shell	6-12 months
Oatmeal	12 months
Oil, olive, vegetable, salad	6 months
Pasta, dry (egg noodles)	2-3 years
Pasta, dry (no egg)	2-3 years

Shelf-Stable Product

Most shelf-stable or 'dry' foods (cans, boxes, bags) remain edible for several days, months, or even years past their code date. Always examine the packaging to make sure it has not been damaged too much so that the food is no longer safe to eat.

Do Not Consume Food from Cans or Jars If:

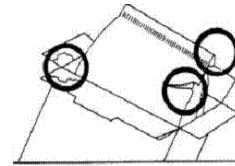
- Leaking or stained
- Swollen can
- Rusty
- Badly dented, crimped or pinched
- Container is cracked
- Foul odor
- Safety seals are broken or missing
- Lids are loose or missing
- Foods exhibit changed color or odor—**never taste suspicious foods!**



Do Not Consume Food from Boxes If:

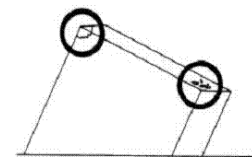
Inside bag:

- Is torn or leaking
- Has moldy or foreign objects inside
- Seals are ripped



Box without an inside bag:

- Is open or torn
- Has live or dead insects, webs, or droppings
- Is stained or wet



Tips on Storing Canned and Boxed Food:

- ✓ Store cans and boxes off the floor, either on a pallet or shelf and 18 inches away from the wall so air can circulate.
- ✓ Store canned and boxed goods in a clean, dry, and cool area (below 85°F).
- ✓ Extremely hot (over 100°F) and cold (below 30°F) temperatures can damage canned goods and shorten shelf life.
- ✓ Always rotate your stock—First in-First out! Distribute or use older products before newer ones.

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