

## BEST BEFORE & EXPIRY DATES

### Best Before Is Not An Expiry Date!

Best Before and expiration dates are two separate labels with separate purposes and different requirements. Understanding the difference provides insight into why the Calgary Food Bank distributes some food near or past its Best Before date, why this practice is safe, and how it can contribute to a hunger-free community.

Many of us have done it: Find an unopened box of pasta at the back of the pantry, see that it's past its Best Before date, and throw it in the trash or compost to be safe. But is that really necessary? "Best before" and other food labelling terms can cause confusion, and many are surprised to learn that best before dates are simply a guideline, not a rule set in stone. It is still safe to eat unopened food after the Best Before date. It may have just lost some flavour or freshness, but often you will not be able to tell a difference.



### Storage and Handling

Any food can become unsafe to eat if handled or stored the wrong way. Shelf stable food should be kept in a dry, dark place and protected from extreme temperatures. Meat, dairy, eggs and some produce should be kept in the fridge. Inspect your food for signs (and smells) of spoilage. When in doubt, throw it out!

[LEARN MORE](#)





**Best Before**



**Expiry Date**

## Best Before Dates

Best Before refers to food quality and looks like this: **BB/MA 2019 FE 11**

Best before dates refer to the date after which a food product's qualities like taste and texture might be impacted. Unopened shelf stable foods that are stored properly are safe to eat well past their best before date, though they might lose some of their flavour or their texture may change. Dry pasta may break more easily, or sauces and salsas may become slightly less flavourful. However, they are still safe to consume and retain their nutritional value.

## Expiry Dates

Expiry refers to food safety and looks like this: **EXP2017MR1**

An expiration date is the date after which the nutritional value of the food may decline to below what's printed on the nutrition label. An expiration date is only required for certain products, including baby formula and meal replacements. This is because these products have specific compositional specifications that might degrade after the expiration date.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT DATE LABELLING](#)

## Food Safety At The Food Bank

The Calgary Food Bank keeps the safety of our clients top of mind. We have strict food handling and safety protocols that ensure food is kept at the right temperature and given to clients promptly. Any shelf stable product in damaged, dented, bulging, or swelling packaging is discarded. We accept canned and dry goods up to one year past their best before date, preferring to receive these food donations as close to their date as possible. We have the conditions to keep rice and pasta shelf stable and will accept these regardless of their dates.

**COMMUNITY OWNED. COMMUNITY SUPPORTED.**