

Know your dates

Checking dates saves money and lets us enjoy food at its best, but do you know what they mean?

Write down what you think each of the following date labels mean.

USE BY:

BEST BEFORE:

SELL BY:

DISPLAY UNTIL:

What could you do with food that is approaching its 'use by' date?

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SESSION GUIDE

Time

This session will take approximately 15 minutes, but can be made longer or shorter as required.

Delivery technique

Breakout groups or individual exercise, followed by group discussion.

Purpose

The purpose of this session is to explain the differences between food date labels and to draw attention to the practical things people can do to make the most of foods approaching their use by date. Love Food Hate Waste promotes understanding of date labels and behaviours around them to help consumers reduce food waste.

Session outline

1. Either individually or in breakout groups, hand out the 'know your dates' activity sheet and give everyone two or three minutes to complete the exercise.
2. When the majority of people have completed the sheet, ask for volunteers to share with the group their interpretation of the different food date labels. See the table below for the different meanings of food date labels, emphasise that use by dates are for food safety and foods can be used right up to the end of this date or frozen up to the day before. 'Best before' dates are for quality and 'sell by' and 'display until' dates can be ignored.
3. Next ask the group what they would do with foods approaching the 'use by' date. See below for a list of ideas if the group are struggling, or share your own.
4. Emphasise the benefits of understanding date labels in relation to reducing food waste.
5. Close the session by re-quizzing the group on the meanings of date labels, or asking everyone for one thing that they will start doing as a result of the session, or for a tip they have learnt etc.



Outcomes

Participants are aware of the meaning of different food date labels and the practical everyday things which they can do to make the most of their food before it goes past its use by date.

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FOOD DATE LABEL MEANINGS



USE BY:

Food can be eaten up to the end of the 'use by' date, but not after – even if it looks and smells fine.



BEST BEFORE:

These dates refer to quality rather than food safety. When the date is passed, the food won't be unsafe but might begin to lose its flavour and texture. One exception is eggs – never eat eggs after the 'best before' date.



SELL BY:

You can ignore these dates as they are for shop staff not shoppers.



DISPLAY UNTIL:

You can ignore these dates as they are for shop staff not shoppers.

FOR ALL FOODS:

Always follow on pack storage guidance and instructions such as "eat within three days of opening". To extend the life of food beyond its date, freeze it before the date and defrost and use it within 24 hours.