



UNDERSTANDING DATE STAMPS & LABELS

DATE STAMPS DEMYSTIFIED

Requirements for food labelling are set by the [Canadian Food Inspection Agency](#).

Best Before... Expiry... Packaged On... Use By... Sell By... Widespread misconceptions about date labels lead to waste. The NZWC is advocating for clearer date labels in 2018.

Date labels must be bilingual and presented as year/month/day. The year is optional unless needed for clarity. Months are represented by two-letter abbreviations (MR=March; MA=May).

THE TRUTH ABOUT DURABLE LIFE/BEST BEFORE DATES (BBD)

BBDs *are* based on estimates of optimal freshness, taste, nutrition, or other qualities identified by the manufacturer.

BBDs are not a guarantee of food safety, even before the date.

BBDs in the past *do not* mean that a food is unsafe.

BBDs do not apply once packages have been opened.

BBDs *are not required* on shelf stable foods.

EXPIRY DATES — NOT THE SAME AS BEST BEFORE DATES

Expiry dates are required *only* on foods with strict nutritional or compositional specifications (nutritional supplements, infant formula, and meal replacements or other specific dietary products).

Foods *must not* be donated or sold after the expiry date.

Expiry dates indicate the time within which a product is expected to meet specifications

FOODS AT OR PAST THE BBD...

- are often safe and of high quality (especially shelf-stable foods)
- can be sold – though often at a discount – providing an opportunity for people to access affordable food
- may be donatable – ask organizations about their policies
- can be frozen to maintain freshness and extend shelf life – prevents waste and gives organizations more flexibility to use them
- may sometimes be re-worked, re-processed, or incorporated into recipes to extend shelf life – consider doing in-house before donating
- should always be assessed for spoilage and quality.

Organizations may or may not accept donations past the BBD. Even if food is safe, some see offering post-dated foods as an affront to dignity.

[Food Rescue](#), Food Banks Canada (p.45), and others have guidelines for using foods past the BBD.

LABELLING FOODS FOR DONATION

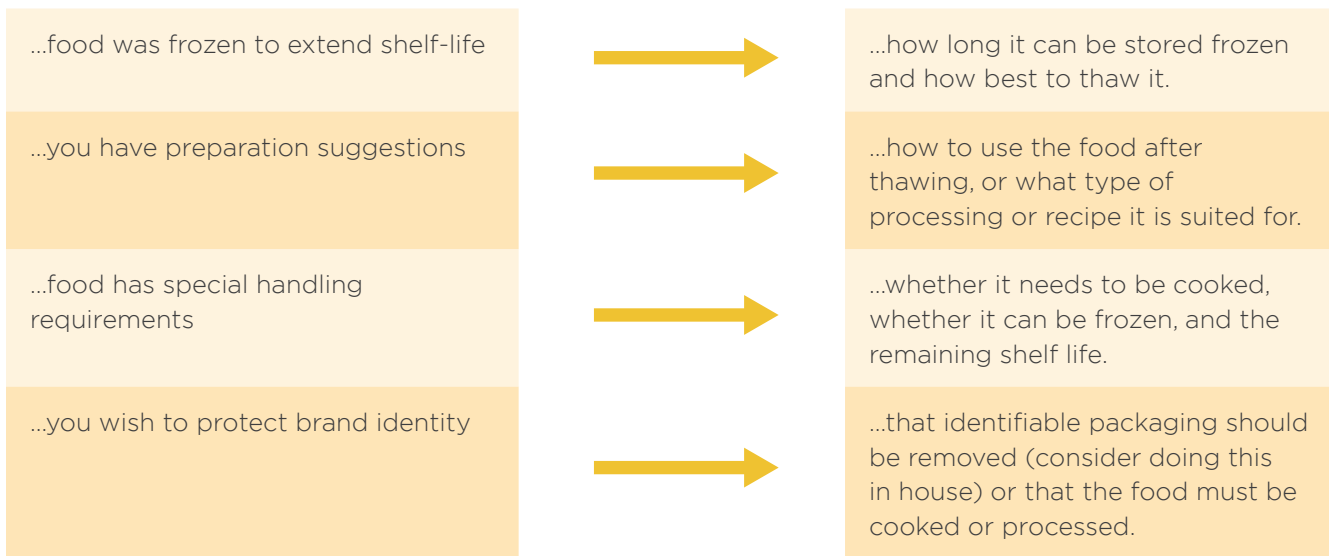
- Donated foods have the same labelling requirements as foods for sale (p.23).
- Add or correct essential information if foods have been de-packaged, re-packaged, or have packaging errors.
- Foods destined for grocery redistribution must have the required information directly on the label. If foods will be re-packaged, processed, or used for cooking by the recipient organization, the information must also be provided (either on a label or in attached documentation).
- All ingredient and food safety information must be provided if packaging is altered to protect brand identity
- Allergen identification is a food safety issue. **Priority allergens must be declared on food labels (p.23).**
- Provide freezing date and indicate if food was previously frozen.

Make sure your staff know how to handle, store, donate, label, and maximize the shelf life of your products.

YOU CAN HELP COMMUNITY FOOD PROGRAMS MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR DONATION BY PROVIDING EXTRA INFORMATION ABOUT THE FOOD:

If...

Then let the recipient know...



RECORD KEEPING FOR FOOD DONATION

TRACK DONATIONS	Quantify how much food was diverted before it deteriorated
PROVIDE PRODUCT INFORMATION	Help recipients manage inventory and plan how to use the food
KEEP RECORDS	Note food condition and temperature up to point of handover
ENSURE TRACEABILITY	Keep track of “one step forward” and “one step back” when food changes hands
OPTIONAL TAX CLAIMS	Check whether the recipient provides donation tax receipts for fair market value