

This data sheet provides guidance on how UK law applies to food products. In the UK millions of tonnes of food are thrown away due to ‘not being used in time’, and for a third of this food, date labelling is cited as a factor. According to WRAP (The Waste and Resources Action Programme), set up in 2000 to promote sustainable waste management, **best before date labelled food can be consumed after this date.\***

**‘Use By’ date (food safety)**

Food cannot be sold, redistributed or consumed after this date. The only exception to this is if the food has gone through a safe freezing or cooking process, before the ‘Use By’ date has passed, and has been appropriately re-labelled.

**‘Best Before Date’**

The ‘Best Before’ date relates to food quality. **Food with a ‘Best Before’ date can be sold, redistributed and consumed after this date.** Providing food is stored in appropriate conditions – and has not become otherwise contaminated, it will be safe to consume for a period of time after the ‘Best Before’ date has passed.

There is no need to show a ‘best before’ or ‘use by’ date on the following (exempt from the EU Food Information for Consumers Regulations)

- fresh fruit and vegetables which haven’t been peeled, cut or similarly treated (except for sprouting seeds and similar products, like legume sprouts)
- wines, liqueur wines, sparkling wines, aromatised wines and similar products made from fruit other than grapes
- drinks made from fermented grapes or grape musts
- drinks containing 10% or more alcohol by volume
- baked or pastry goods which are normally consumed within 24 hours of being made
- vinegar



**Receiving Surplus – your responsibilities**

If receiving surplus near or beyond its ‘Best Before’ date, check all products are of sufficient quality, pack integrity is maintained, and indicate how long each will be good to eat. You can use the WRAP/FSA/Defra guidance for this found at <https://www.wrap.org.uk/content/surplus-food-redistribution-wrap-work>

<b>Fresh produce</b> (uncut) Their suitability for consumption is likely to depend on factors like the food type, the variety, seasonality, and the nature of the individual item.	1 day to 2 weeks or more (for a more robust item – such as a swede)	Confirm absence of moulds or rotting.
<b>Bread and bakery</b> Packed bread and bakery products	2 days – 1 week	Inspect for quality, especially for the presence of mould (samples may need to be opened to allow this inspection).
<b>Bread and bakery</b> Items sold in long life packaging (e.g. some pitta breads)	1 month +	As above in foods that can support mould growth. See the example for Cakes below.
<b>Ambient</b> Packet: Crisps	1 month	Confirm absence of staleness; confirm pack integrity maintained
<b>Ambient</b> Packet: Cake	3 months	Confirm pack integrity maintained
<b>Ambient</b> Packet: Biscuits/Cereals	6 months	Confirm pack integrity
<b>Ambient</b> Packet: Dried pasta and pulses	3 years	Confirm pack integrity
<b>Ambient</b> Canned foods: Soup/Beans/Fish/Meat/etc.	3 years	Confirm pack integrity is maintained and can be free from dents
<b>Ambient</b> Foil pack: Dry pasta/Soup mix/etc.	3 years	Confirm pack integrity
<b>Ambient</b> Jars: Jams/Condiments/Sauces**	3 years	Confirm integrity of seal and jars free from damage

\*Data collated from the WRAP, the Food Standards Agency and Defra guidance (updated April 2020) found at: <https://wrap.org.uk/content/surplus-food-redistribution-labelling-guidance>

\*\*Ambient ONLY, does not apply to chilled storage prior to opening