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David A. Paterson
New York State
Governor



Mindy A. Bockstein
CPB Chairperson and
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A public service of the

NYS Consumer Protection Board

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You Are What You Eat!

The New York State
Consumer Protection Board's
Guide to Food Terminology,
Purchasing and Related
Consumer Information



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FOOD

INTRODUCTION

Ever wonder the difference between “natural” and “organic,” or “light,” “low,” and “free?” This brochure has been developed by the New York State Consumer Protection Board (CPB) to provide key information on food and beverage items so that you can better understand the ingredients and terminology, thereby enabling you to make more informed purchasing decisions. Thus, you will know what you are buying with your hard-earned money.

Commonly Used Terms

Additives: The term refers to any substance for which the intended use may reasonably be expected to result -- directly or indirectly -- in its becoming a component or otherwise affecting the characteristics of any food item.



Allergens: A food allergy is an immune system response to a food that the body mistakenly believes is harmful. Although an individual could be allergic to any food, such as fruits, vegetables, and meats, there are eight foods that account for 90% of all food-allergic reactions. These are: **milk, egg, peanut, tree nut** (walnut, cashew, etc.), **fish, shellfish, soy,** and **wheat.**

Anaphylaxis is a serious allergic reaction that is rapid in onset and may cause death.

Code Dating on Food: The most common form of dating is referred to as “open dating.” With the use of a calendar date as opposed to a code on a food product, “open dating” can help the store determine how long to display the product for sale. It can also help the purchaser to know the time limit to purchase or use the product at its best quality.

“Open dating” is not a safety date. “Open dating” is found primarily on perishable foods such as meat, poultry, eggs and dairy products.

“Closed” or “coded” dating might appear on shelf stable products such as canned and boxed foods.

There are several types of dating terms used on labels:

Best If Used By: This date is recommended for best flavor or quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.

Champagne: A bubbling wine from the Champagne region of France. Bubbling wine is called “spumante” in Italy, “Seki” in Germany, and “vin mousseux” in other regions of France. In the United States, bubbling wines are usually referred to as “champagne.”

Liqueurs: These drinks are made by adding sugar and flavouring such as fruits, herbs or flowers to brandy or to a combination of alcohol and water. Most liqueurs contain 20-65 percent alcohol. They are usually consumed in small quantities after dinner.

Proof: In the United States, it is exactly twice the percentage of alcohol. Therefore, a bottle of liquor labeled “100 Proof” contains 50 percent alcohol.

Sulfites: Sulfur has been used as a preservative in winemaking for some time. Some individuals are extremely sensitive to these agents used to prevent wine spoilage, thus sulfides must be listed on package labels. European winemakers pioneered the use of sulfur dioxide (SO₂) two hundred years ago. Unfortunately, freshly pressed grape juice has a tendency to spoil due to contamination from bacteria and wild yeasts present on the grape skins. Not only does sulfur dioxide inhibit the growth of molds and bacteria, but it also stops oxidation (browning) and preserves the wine's natural flavor.

Wine: An alcoholic beverage produced through the fermentation of grape juice. Other fruit and vegetable juices, such as dandelion and elderberry are also occasionally used in winemaking.



Organic wines are produced using organically grown grapes. No pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, chemical fertilizers, or synthetic chemicals of any kind are allowed on the vines or in the soil. Moreover, organic winemakers often avoid many of the chemical substances used to stabilize conventional wines.

Sources:

Food Information contained in this publication was researched from the following sources, including: Agriculture Marketing Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture; Food Safety and Inspection Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, U.S. Food and Drug Administration; U.S. Food and Drug Administration; Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture; Argonne National Laboratory; Human Health Fact Sheet; Dairy Farming Today; Department of Food Science, Cornell University; Healthcastle.com; Discovery Health; The Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis, Mayo Clinic.com Network; Willy Street Co-op

Beverage Information contained in this publication was researched from the following sources, including: Epicurious, MedlinePlus, The National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health; Medindia.com; Nutribase 7; Organic Wine Company; The Raven Restaurant; World Health Organization

Group 3 are those foods that do not pose a safety hazard even after opening and temperature abused, but that may experience a more rapid deterioration in quality over time if not refrigerated. The manufacturer determines whether to include on the label a statement that refrigeration is needed to maintain the quality characteristics of the product to maximize acceptance by the consumer. These foods do not pose a safety problem. Foods in this group may have barriers built into the formulation (for example, preservative systems such as benzoates, salt, acidification) to prevent the growth of foodborne pathogens if the product is temperature abused.

To avoid confusion between the refrigeration standards, remember that the first two food groups **require** refrigeration at some point to avoid spoilage. Group C foods **do not require** refrigeration, but keeping the foods cold will extend the product's shelf-life.

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

Alcohol comes from fermenting starches and sugars. Alcohol has about 7 calories per gram. These are considered "empty" calories because alcohol contains no beneficial nutrients, such as vitamins and minerals.

A 12-ounce beer contains about 150 calories. Sugary, carbonated beverages and fruit juices contribute additional calories when mixed with alcohol in a cocktail. Beers, wines, and liquors all contain different amounts of alcohol. In general, a 12-ounce beer, a 5-ounce glass of wine, and a 1.5-ounce shot of liquor have about the same amount of alcohol and the same number of calories.

Beer: A low-alcohol beverage brewed from malted barley and cereals (such as corn or rye) mixed with yeast (for fermentation) and flavored with hops. Alcohol content in beer is generally between 3 to 8 percent.



Generally, three types of beer are sold: **regular**, **light**, and **non-alcoholic**. The term light intends to signify a product with less alcohol and fewer calories than regular beer. Non-alcoholic beer usually claims less than a half percent of alcohol and is intended for people who desire a product with little or no alcohol.

Code Dating on Food (con't.)

Use By: This date is the last date recommended for the use of the product while at peak quality. The date has been determined by the manufacturer of the product.

Since product dates are not a guide for the safe use of an item, you should follow the guide in this publication regarding how long you can store a food product and still use it at top quality.

Remember:

- Purchase the food product before the date expires.
- If perishable, take the food home immediately after purchase and refrigerate it promptly. Freeze the food if you cannot use it within the recommended timeframes on the following charts.
- Once a perishable product is frozen, it doesn't matter if the date expires because foods kept frozen continuously are safe for an almost indefinite time.
- Follow handling recommendations on product.

Sell By: A date that tells the store how long to display the product for sale. The purchaser should buy the product before the date expires.

If a product has a "Sell By" date or no date, cook or freeze the product by the times on the following charts.

Food Storage Time Charts

Chart 1

Product	Storage Times After Purchase
Poultry	1 or 2 Days
Beef, Veal, Pork and Lamb	3 to 5 Days
Ground Meat and Ground Poultry	1 or 2 Days
Fresh Variety Meats (Liver, Tongue, Brain, Kidneys, Heart Chitterlings)	1 or 2 Days
Cured Ham (Cook before eating)	5 to 7 Days
Sausage from Pork, Beef, or Turkey (uncooked)	1 or 2 Days
Eggs	3 to 5 Weeks

Chart 2

Processed Product	Unopened, After Purchase	After Opening
Cooked Poultry	3 to 4 Days	3 to 4 Days
Cooked Sausage	3 to 4 Days	3 to 4 Days
Sausage (Hard, dry, shelf, stable)	6 Weeks (pantry)	3 Weeks
Corned Beef (uncooked, in pouch with pickling juices)	2 Weeks	3 to 4 Days
Bacon	2 Weeks	7 Days
Hotdogs	2 Weeks (but no longer than 1 week after a "Sell By" date)	7 Days
Lunch Meats	2 Weeks (but not longer than 1 week after a "Sell By" date)	3 to 5 Days
Ham (Fully Cooked)	7 Days	Slices 3 Days; Whole 7 Days
Ham (Canned, Labeled "Keep Refrigerated")	9 Months	3 to 4 Days
Ham (Canned, Shelf Stable)	2 Years (pantry)	3 to 4 Days
Canned Meat and Poultry (Shelf Stable)	2 to 5 Years (pantry)	3 to 4 Days
Vacuum-Packed Dinners (Commercial brand with USDA seal)	2 Weeks	3 to 4 Days

Dietary Cholesterol: The human body naturally manufactures all of the cholesterol it needs, but you also get cholesterol from animal products, such as meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, dairy products, lard and butter.

Fats: There are varying fat contents and forms, including: **Monounsaturated fat**, which remains liquid at room temperature but may start to solidify in the refrigerator. These "good" fats are found mainly in plant sources, like nuts, avocados and olive, peanut and canola oils. They are liquid at room temperature.

Polyunsaturated fat, is usually liquid at room temperature and in the refrigerator. Foods high in polyunsaturated fats include vegetable oils, such as safflower, corn, sunflower, soy and cottonseed oils. Fats, which we need to get from the foods we eat, are necessary for the creation of cell walls and hormones in the body. **Omega-3 fatty acids** are polyunsaturated fats found mostly in seafood. Good sources of omega-3s include fatty, cold-water fish, such as salmon, mackerel and herring. Flaxseeds, flax oil and walnuts also contain omega-3 fatty acids, and small amounts are found in soybean and canola oils.

Refrigeration Requirements



The FDA (U.S. Food and Drug Administration) has identified three groups of food requiring refrigeration and developed model statements for each as part of their labeling requirements, as clarified below.

GROUP 1

IMPORTANT:
Must Always Be Refrigerated To Maintain Safety

Group 1 foods could become hazardous if they are stored in temperatures other than that which is specified on the label, and which, if such conditions occur, will support the growth of infectious or toxigenic microorganisms that may be present. Outgrowth of these microorganisms would render the food unsafe. Foods that must be refrigerated for safety do not have preservatives or receive a thermal process or other treatment in the final packaging that is adequate to destroy foodborne pathogens that can grow under conditions of temperature abuse during storage and distribution.

GROUP 2

IMPORTANT:
Must Be Refrigerated After Opening To Maintain Safety

Group 2 includes those foods that are shelf-stable as a result of processing, but once opened, the unused portion could become hazardous unless the contents are refrigerated. These foods receive a thermal process or other treatment that is adequate to destroy or inactivate foodborne pathogens in the unopened package, but after the package is opened, the surviving or potentially contaminating microorganisms can grow and render the product unsafe. These foods have no barriers (for example, barriers could be preservatives such as benzoates, salt, acidification) in the product formulation to prevent the growth of foodborne pathogens after opening and subsequent storage under temperature abuse conditions.

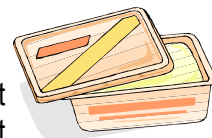
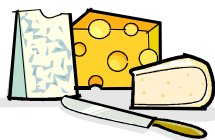
GROUP 3

"Refrigerate for Quality" or some other statement that explains to the consumer that the storage conditions are recommended to protect the quality of the product.





MILK PRODUCTS



Pasteurized: Pasteurization is the heat processing of a liquid or food to kill pathogenic bacteria to make a food safe to eat. Using pasteurization to kill pathogenic bacteria has helped reduce the transmission of diseases, such as typhoid fever, tuberculosis, scarlet fever, polio, and dysentery. It's important to note that foods can become contaminated even after they have been pasteurized. For example, all pasteurized foods must be refrigerated. If temperature is abused (e.g., if milk or eggs are not kept refrigerated), pasteurized foods can become contaminated.

Ultra-pasteurized: This term means that the milk is heated to a minimum of 280°F for a minimum 2 seconds. This temperature and time combination is lethal to bacteria, killing virtually all potentially harmful bacteria in milk. Though Ultra-Pasteurized milk is processed to be free of spoilage and harmful bacteria, it is not considered sterile because it is not hermetically sealed (i.e. canned). Thus, it requires refrigeration. Once an Ultra-Pasteurized product is opened, it may become contaminated with bacteria. Thus, after opening, ultra-pasteurized milk should be kept well refrigerated (34-38°F) and consumed within 7-10 days for best quality and taste.



Milk: Milk comes with various levels of milk-fat, as noted below.

Whole milk: Whole milk must contain at least 3.25% milk fat and 8.25% milk solids by weight meaning it derives about 50% of its calories from fat.

Reduced-fat milk (2%): This milk contains 2% milk fat. The percentage of milk fat refers to the percentage of fat by weight, and much of milk's weight is water. Once you subtract the water from 2% milk, for example, the result will be a product containing 20% fat by weight; such milk actually derives 35% of its calories from fat.

Low-fat milk (1%): One-percent milk gets 23% of its calories from fat.

Skimmed milk/non-fat milk: This type of milk has as much fat removed as possible. It may not contain more than 0.5% milk fat by weight, and usually contains less than 0.5 gm of fat per cup, deriving just 5% of its calories from fat. Skimmed milk has about half the calories of whole milk.

Fats: (con't.)

Saturated fat is usually solid or waxy at room temperature. Saturated fat is most often found in animal products — such as red meat, poultry, butter and whole milk. Other foods high in saturated fat include coconut, palm and other tropical oils.

Trans fat, also referred to as **trans-fatty acids**, comes from adding hydrogen to vegetable oil through a process called hydrogenation. This makes the fat more solid and less likely to spoil. Shortenings and some margarines also are high in trans fat. Food manufacturers are required to list trans fat content on nutrition labels. Amounts less than 0.5 grams per serving are listed as 0 grams trans fat on the food label.

Hydrogenated fat is a common ingredient in commercial baked goods such as crackers, cookies and cakes, and in fried foods, such as doughnuts and French fries. It is known to contribute to coronary artery disease. If a fat or oil ingredient is completely hydrogenated, the term in the ingredient list will include the term "hydrogenated." Or, if partially hydrogenated, the phrase in the ingredient list will include the term "partially hydrogenated." Oil that is partially hydrogenated is a source of *trans* fat.

-Free: This term following another word such as "sugar" or "fat" means that a product contains no amount of, or only trivial or "physiologically inconsequential" amounts of, **one or more** of these components: fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, sugars, and calories (as in "fat-free" or "sugar-free"). Synonyms for "free" include "without," "no" and "zero."



The USFDA-CFSAN (U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition) definition of "free" is:

- a serving of food which contains fewer than 5 calories;
- fewer than 0.5 grams total fat; or
- fewer than 0.5 grams saturated fat; or
- fewer than 0.5 grams trans fatty acids; or
- fewer than 2 milligrams cholesterol; or
- fewer than 5 milligrams of sodium; or
- fewer than 0.5 grams sugars.

Fresh: "Fresh," suggests that a food is raw or unprocessed, has never been frozen or heated, and contains no preservatives. (Irradiation at low levels is allowed.) "Fresh frozen," "frozen fresh," and "freshly frozen," can be used for foods that are quickly frozen while still fresh. Blanching (brief scalding before freezing to prevent nutrient breakdown) is permitted.

Other uses of the term "fresh," such as in "fresh milk" or "freshly baked bread," are not impacted by this definition.

Good Source: This term means that one serving of a food contains 10 to 19 percent of the Daily Value for a particular nutrient.

High: This term can be used if the food contains 20 percent or more of the Daily Value for a particular nutrient in a serving.



Hormones/rbST: bST (bovine somatotropin) is a protein hormone that occurs naturally in all dairy cows. Some farmers choose to supplement some of their cows with rbST, also known as bovine growth hormone (rBGH), to help increase milk production. No significant difference has been shown between milk from rbST-treated and untreated cows.



Light: This term can mean two things:

1. a nutritionally altered product that contains one-third fewer calories or half the fat of the original/reference food, and
2. the sodium content of a low-calorie, low-fat food has been reduced by 50 percent.

The term "light" can also be used to describe such properties as texture and color, as long as the label explains the intent. For example, "light brown sugar."

Low: This term can be used to describe foods that can be eaten frequently without exceeding dietary guidelines for one or more of these components: fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, and calories. Synonyms for low include "little," "few," and "low source of."



According to the USFDA-CFSAN, "low" means:

- a serving of food containing 40 or fewer calories; or
- 3 grams or fewer of total fat; or
- 1 gram or less of saturated fat; or
- 20 milligrams or fewer of cholesterol; or
- 140 milligrams or fewer of sodium.

Note: There is no USFDA-CFSAN definition as applied to sugars.

More: This term means that a serving of food, whether altered or not, contains a nutrient that is at least 10 percent of the Daily Value more than the food with which it is being compared. The 10 percent of Daily Value also applies to "fortified," "enriched" and "added" "extra and plus" claims, but in those cases, the food must be altered.

Natural: A product containing no artificial ingredient or added color and is only minimally processed may be labeled natural. The minimal processing must not fundamentally alter the raw product. The label must explain the use of the term natural, by stating, for example, "no added colorings or artificial ingredients," or, "minimally processed."

Nitrates: Nitrites are manufactured mainly for use as a food preservative, and both nitrates and nitrites are used extensively to enhance the color and extend the shelf life of processed meats.

Organic: Organic food is produced by farmers emphasizing the use of renewable resources and the conservation of soil and water. Organic meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products come from animals that are not given antibiotics or growth hormones. Organic food is produced without using most conventional pesticides; fertilizers made with synthetic ingredients or sewage sludge; bioengineering; or ionizing radiation. Products labeled "organic" must consist of at least 95 percent organically produced ingredients (excluding water and salt).



Before a product can be labeled "organic," a government-approved certifier inspects the farm where the food is grown to make sure the farmer is following all the rules necessary to meet USDA organic standards. Companies that handle or process organic food before it is shipped to your local supermarket or restaurant must be certified as well.

Pesticides: A pesticide is any substance or mixture of substances intended for:

- preventing;
- destroying;
- repelling, or
- mitigating any pest.



Though often misunderstood to refer only to insecticides, the term pesticide also applies to herbicides, fungicides, and various other substances used to control pests.

Under United States law, a pesticide is also any substance or mixture of substances intended for use as a plant regulator, defoliant, or desiccant.

Reduced: This term means that a nutritionally altered product contains at least 25 percent less of a nutrient or of calories than the regular, or reference, product. However, a reduced claim can't be made on a product if its reference food already meets the requirement for a "low" claim.

