

# Best Before vs Use By dates

Seeing a Best Before or Use By Date on a product is a way for consumers to know if a product is safe to eat or if the quality of the product has been compromised. These markings are known as Date Markings and consumers should look for these when purchasing and consuming packaged products.

We explain the difference between the two forms of date markings used in New Zealand below.

## **Best Before Date -**

When you see a food product that has passed its 'Best Before' date it may still be perfectly safe to eat. A 'Best Before' date is the last date on which you can expect a food product to retain all of its quality attributes, provided it has been stored correctly and is unopened. Quality attributes include things such as colour, taste, texture and flavour as well as subjective product attributes such as freshness of the product.

## **Use By Date -**

When you see a food product that has passed its 'Use By' date for health and safety reasons it should not be eaten. If the food has been stored correctly and the package unopened it is safe to consume the food only up until the date specified at the Use by Date.



### **Baked on Date -**

Instead of a 'Best Before' date, the label on a package of bread with a shelf life of less than 7 days may include its 'baked-on' date or its 'baked-for' date.

### **Excluded -**

There are no date marking requirements for packaged food with a shelf life of 2 years or more.

### **What can be sold? -**

Retailers can still sell food past its Best Before Date as long as the food is not spoiled and remains fit for human consumption; that being it is not damaged, deteriorated or perished to an extent that it affects its reasonable intended use. Retailers can not sell food past its Use by Date, because consumption of the food may pose a health and safety risk.

