



DEFENSE COMMISSARY AGENCY CUSTOMER INFORMATION

WHAT DO THE DATES ON THE PACKAGE MEAN IN MY OVERSEAS COMMISSARY?

To provide commissary customers overseas the same high quality products commissary shoppers enjoy in the US, the Defense Commissary Agency has some manufacturers freeze certain meat, poultry and dairy products at the plant. These products, normally sold in a chilled state in the US, are shipped to commissaries overseas frozen to extend product shelf life and seal in freshness.

Frozen Products Sold Frozen

Meats, chicken, sausages, bacon, buttermilk and other products frozen by the manufacturer, shipped frozen and sold frozen in the commissary may be marked with the manufacturer's chilled 'sell-by' date even though the product has been maintained in a frozen condition since it left the manufacturer.

Frozen product has a longer shelf life than chilled product. The USDA advises consumers that once a perishable product is frozen, it doesn't matter if the date expires because foods kept frozen continuously are safe indefinitely.¹

On products frozen at the plant, DeCA applies a one-year extension beyond the manufacturer's chilled sell-by date stamped on the package, unless otherwise specified by the manufacturer. Signs are posted near the product to indicate the products new extended self-life date.



A sign in the commissary identifies chicken product frozen at the plant. The commissary applies a one-year extension beyond the manufacturer's original chilled sell-by date to products frozen at the plant, unless otherwise specified by the manufacturer.

Products Shipped Frozen and Sold Chilled at the Commissary

Under controlled conditions, commissary personnel thaw some products that were shipped frozen, and these products are sold chilled. These products will state 'Previously Frozen' on the package or have a sign nearby. Commissary personnel place two new dates on the package: the date the product was thawed, and below it, the new sell-by date. If a label will not stick to the product, commissary personnel will place a sign with the sell-by date next to the product.



A package of seasoned shredded beef shows the manufacturer's original sell or freeze by date of 06-14-15. The product was frozen by the manufacturer at the plant, shipped frozen and the commissary thawed it under controlled conditions. The commissary placed the date the product was thawed on a sticker with the new sell-by date below.

Perishable and Semi-perishable Products

A one-time extension can be given by Military Food Inspectors to perishable and semi-perishable products if the item on hand, or additional lots of that item, are of insufficient quantity to meet demands before the next anticipated delivery. Extensions are never given on baby foods, baby formula, vitamins, over-the-counter nonprescription drugs and other health and beauty items.

Before extending the date on a perishable or semi-perishable product, Military Food Inspectors evaluate the product to determine if it is wholesome and safe for human consumption.

Once determined wholesome and safe for human consumption, prepackaged frozen and chilled luncheon meats, cheeses and processed meat items can be extended up to seven days. Semi-perishable products (canned goods, bottled drinks, boxed and packaged foods such as cake mixes and noodles) can be extended up to 30 days. Chilled processed meat products can be frozen on the last day of their shelf life date and sold frozen for up to 30 days beyond their original sell-by date.

Commissary personnel reduce the price on perishable and semi-perishable products that have been extended and identify the products as marked down for quick sale with signs or place the products in a marked-down or clearance section.

Have a question about products in your commissary?

Ask any commissary employee. We're here to help.

Your Commissary... It's Worth the Trip!

¹ Food Product Dating, United States Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service, <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/food-labeling/food-product-dating/food-product-dating/>