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# Professional and Personal Wellness Newsletter

www.properwell.com

269 660-2568

## Deciphering Food Expiration Dates

### TRIVIA QUESTION

What are the only items required by federal law to have an expiration date?

To enter this month's trivia drawing for a Professional and Personal Wellness sweatshirt please call Laurie at 269 660-2568 or Lauries @properwell.com with your answer.

After my son took a food safety class at Michigan State University, it was like living with the food police. To this day, he still watches my every move in the kitchen. So, when I initially decided to write about the topic of food safety, I thought it would be pretty boring. After all, common sense says to wash your hands, keep food surfaces clean, and to not cross contaminate one food with another. What more could there be? But, I was recently inspired with the topic of food expiration dates when I realized the eggs I used to fix breakfast one morning were two weeks past their expiration date. Luckily, no one got sick and the incident is now my little family secret.

It was then that I decided to do some research into expiration dates and sell by dates to find out what they really mean. What I discovered was that, while sniffing the milk or cottage cheese may seem an effective way to check for freshness, it is not the "approved" method because sniffing does not tell the whole story. Believe it or not, the approved way lies in a voluntary system of labeling. In fact, the only items required by federal law to be labeled for expiration are infant formula and some baby foods. There are also some states that require pulling dairy items from store shelves on the expiration date.

This brings us to terminology. The actual term "**Expiration Date**" refers at the last date a food should be eaten or used. This last date means use or eat at your own risk. But, wait; there's more when it comes to food safety terminology. Read on...

The labeling "**Sell By**" tells the store how long to display the product for sale and it should be purchased before the date it expires. This date indicates when the product is at its highest level of quality and will still be edible for some time after. The "**Best If Used By**" (or **Before**) date refers only to quality, not safety. This date is recommended for best flavor and is not a purchase or safety date. For instance, sour cream is already sour but can have a fresher taste when it is used by the "**Best If Used By**" date. When you see "**Born on Date**" it refers to the date that beer has been manufactured. Beer is affected by sunlight and can go sub-par after three months. "**Guaranteed fresh**" usually refers to bakery items. They are still edible after the date, but they will not be at peak freshness. "**Use By**" is a date that has been determined by the manufacturer of the product that quality of the product will be at its peak.

So how do you know what to do? Here are some guidelines you can follow: **Milk**— Use within 5 days of the "**Sell By**" date; **Eggs**—Should last for three to five weeks from the "**Sell By**" date; **Chicken and Fish**—Use within one to two days of purchase, or freeze and use within three to six months; **Canned Goods**— If they have a high acid level (e.g., tomato soup or pineapple) they can last up to 18 months. Other canned goods with low acid (e.g., green beans or other vegetables) can last for up to five years. Remember, these are rough guidelines. You should always use caution, especially when you notice a can or food package that is bulged or ballooned—toss it no matter what the date! Expiration dates are anything but clear cut. When it comes to judging whether or not food is safe to eat, it pays to err on the side of caution.



# No Nonsense...Just News

# The Winners Circle

## SUMMER VACATION STORY

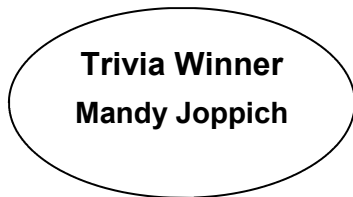


There is still time to submit your Summer Vacation Story. The deadline is Wednesday, September 9. Send all entries to [jbair@properwell.com](mailto:jbair@properwell.com). Grand prize is \$100 and there will be 2- \$50 runner-ups.

## Things that make you say...hmm

"I can't give you a sure-fire formula for success, but I can give you a formula for failure: Try to please everybody all the time."

– *Herbert Bayard Swope*



Trivia Winner  
Mandy Joppich

## Website Announcement

Just a reminder! In order to stay in the loop and get important announcements, make sure that you edit your interests and click the box to have yourself notified of events in your area. Below are instructions to walk you through the process.

1. Click on "My Account" then "My Profile."
2. Click edit profile, it is at the top of the box. Towards the bottom of the page, click on the box that says notify me about events in my area. Then click SAVE.
3. Then Click "Edit Interest," this is also at the top of the box. Click on each activity that you currently do or would like to try. Lastly, Click SAVE.
4. On the top left of the page, click HOME to see immediate results and to refresh the page.

If you need assistance, please contact Julie Bair-Cowles at 269-660-2568 or by email [jbair@properwell.com](mailto:jbair@properwell.com)

## The Recipe Box

### Three-Cheese Chicken Penne Pasta Bake

Prep Time: 20 min , Total Time: 43 min, Makes: 4 servings

- 1-1/2 cups multi-grain penne pasta, uncooked
- 1 pkg. (9 oz.) fresh spinach leaves
- 1 lb. boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into bite-size pieces
- 1 tsp. dried basil leaves
- 1 jar (14-1/2 oz.) spaghetti sauce
- 1 can (14-1/2 oz.) diced tomatoes, drained
- 2 oz. (1/4 of 8-oz. pkg.) PHILADELPHIA Cream Cheese, cubed
- 1 cup KRAFT 2% Milk Shredded Mozzarella Cheese, divided
- 2 Tbsp. KRAFT Grated Parmesan Cheese

**HEAT** oven to 375°F.

**COOK** pasta as directed on package, adding spinach to the boiling water the last minute.

**COOK** and stir chicken and basil in large non-stick skillet sprayed with cooking spray on medium-high heat 3 min. Stir in spaghetti sauce and tomatoes; bring to boil. Simmer on low heat 3 min. or until chicken is done. Stir in Cream cheese.

**DRAIN** pasta mixture; return to pan. Stir in chicken mixture and 1/2 cup mozzarella. Spoon into 2-qt. casserole or 8-inch square baking dish.

**BAKE** 20 min.; top with remaining cheeses. Bake 3 min. or until mozzarella is melted.