

## Sell-by, best-by, use-by: What do food date labels really mean?

**With one exception, it's not about food safety.**

Date labels are confusing and can lead to needlessly throwing away good food. With the exception of infant formula, product dating is set by manufacturers to indicate the latest date for peak quality, not safety. Even if the date expires, a product should be safe, wholesome and of good quality if stored and handled properly.

See the USDA's Food Product Dating fact sheet at [fsis.usda.gov](http://fsis.usda.gov) for more information.

### Food product dating de-mystified:



**Use by:** Last date recommended by manufacturer for peak quality.



**Sell by:** Manufacturer's date to tell store how long to display item for sale.



**Best before/best by:** Manufacturer's recommended date for optimal flavor/quality.



**Closed or coded dates:** Packing numbers used by manufacturers.

## Wasted food = wasted resources

The average American household wastes about 25% of the food they buy – especially produce. When we throw away food, we also waste significant amounts of water, energy, fuel, fertilizer, time and money used to produce, package and transport it.

**Small changes  
make a BIG difference!**



## What about composting?

Composting is great for food that cannot be eaten (banana peels, egg shells) or has spoiled (moldy leftovers, rotten fruits or vegetables). What's even *better* is to not waste food in the first place.

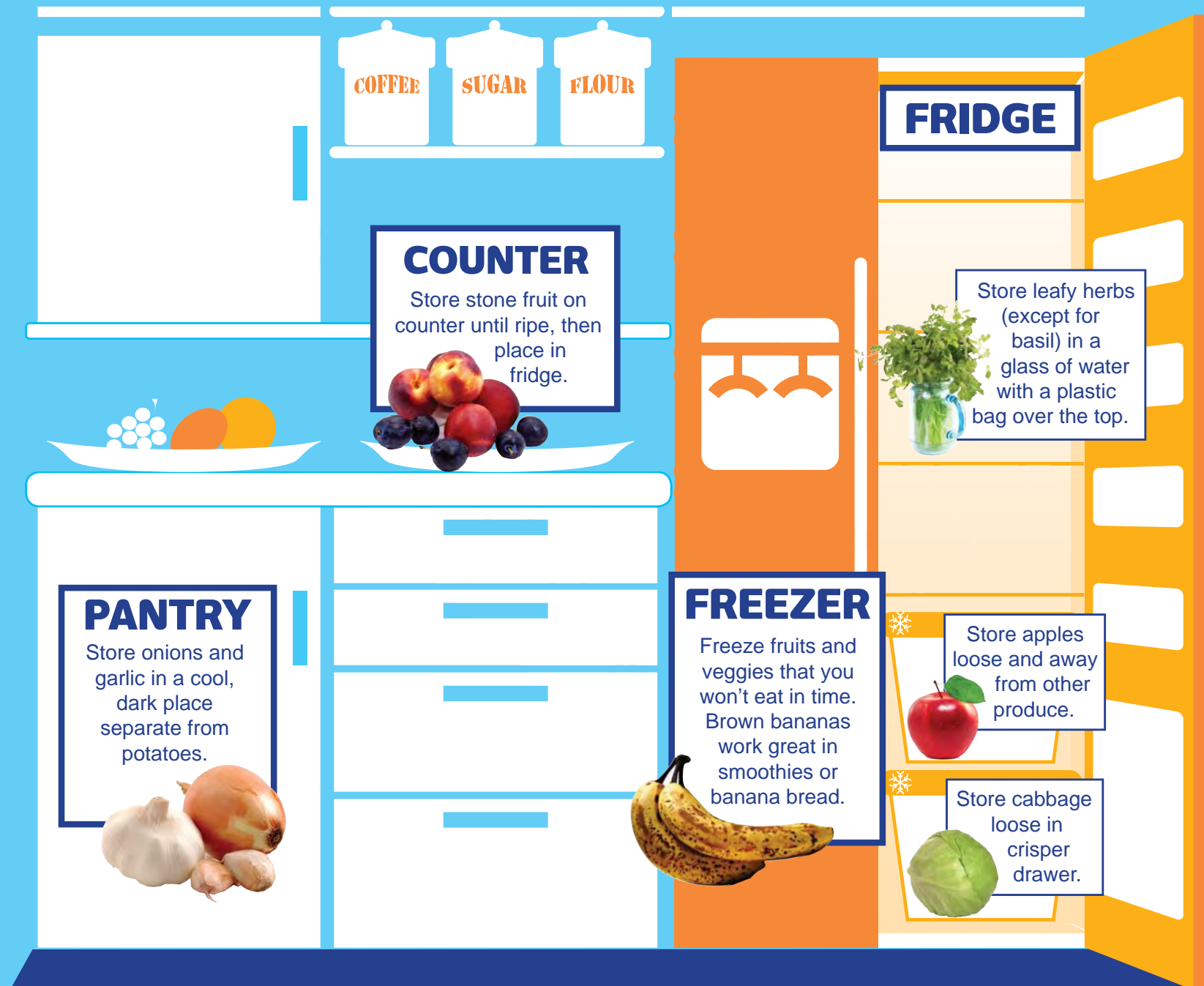
**As much as possible,  
buy what you need  
– eat what you buy.**











**Visit [recyclefood.com](http://recyclefood.com)  
for more tips and tools  
about how to prevent food  
waste at home.**




## Fruit and Vegetable Storage Guide

# KEEP IT FRESH!







**Waste Less, Save More.**



Fruits/Veggies	How to Store
 <b>Apples</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Separate from other produce.
 <b>Artichokes</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Store in plastic bag or sealed container.
 <b>Asparagus</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Remove bands and ties. Store upright in a glass of water with a plastic bag over the top.
 <b>Avocados</b>	<b>Ripen on counter, then store in fridge.</b> Store loose.
 <b>Bananas</b>	<b>Counter.</b> Store away from other fruits and vegetables.
 <b>Basil</b>	<b>Counter.</b> Remove bands and ties. Trim stems and store in water with plastic bag over the top.
 <b>Beans</b> (green, wax)	<b>Fridge.</b> Store in a plastic bag or sealed container.
 <b>Berries</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Store in a container, lid ajar and lined with a dry towel. Wash just before eating to avoid mold.
 <b>Bok Choy</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Remove bands and ties. Store in a sealed container lined with a damp towel.
 <b>Broccoli, Broccolini</b>	<b>Fridge – crisper drawer.</b> Wrap in a damp paper towel.

Fruits/Veggies	How to Store
 <b>Brussel Sprouts</b>	<b>Fridge – crisper drawer.</b> Store in a sealed container.
 <b>Cabbage</b>	<b>Fridge – crisper drawer.</b> Store loose.
 <b>Cauliflower</b>	<b>Fridge – crisper drawer.</b> Store in a plastic bag or sealed container.
 <b>Celery</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Store in a plastic bag or sealed container.
 <b>Cherries</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Store in a plastic bag or sealed container. Wash just before eating to avoid mold.
 <b>Citrus fruits</b>	<b>Fridge – crisper drawer.</b> Store loose.
 <b>Corn</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Store loose, keep in husks.
 <b>Cucumbers</b>	<b>Fridge – crisper drawer.</b> Store loose.
 <b>Eggplant</b>	<b>Fridge – crisper drawer.</b> Store loose.
 <b>Garlic</b>	<b>Cupboard/Pantry.</b> Store loose.

Fruits/Veggies	How to Store
 <b>Grapes</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Store in a sealed container. Wash just before eating to avoid mold.
 <b>Green onions/scallions</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Wrap in a damp towel or store upright in a glass of water.
 <b>Herbs, leafy</b> (cilantro, parsley)	<b>Fridge.</b> Trim stems and store upright in a glass of water with a plastic bag over the top.
 <b>Herbs, woody</b> (rosemary, sage)	<b>Fridge.</b> Wrap in a damp towel and store in a sealed container.
 <b>Leafy greens</b> (lettuce, kale)	<b>Fridge.</b> Remove bands and ties. Store in a sealed container lined with a damp towel.
 <b>Melons</b>	<b>Ripen on counter, then store in fridge.</b> Store loose.
 <b>Mushrooms</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Store in a paper bag.
 <b>Okra</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Store in a paper bag.
 <b>Onions</b>	<b>Cupboard/Pantry.</b> Store loose or in a mesh bag separate from potatoes.
 <b>Pears</b>	<b>Ripen on counter, then store in fridge.</b> Store loose.

Fruits/Veggies	How to Store
 <b>Peppers</b>	<b>Fridge – crisper drawer.</b> Store loose.
 <b>Potatoes</b>	<b>Cupboard/Pantry.</b> Store loose or in a paper bag separate from onions.
 <b>Root veggies</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Store in a sealed container with a dry towel.
 <b>Squash - summer</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Wrap whole or sliced pieces in a damp towel.
 <b>Squash – winter</b>	<b>Cupboard/Pantry.</b> Store loose.
 <b>Stone fruits</b> (peaches, plums)	<b>Ripen on counter, then store in fridge.</b> Store loose.
 <b>Tomatillos</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Store in a paper bag.
 <b>Tomatoes</b>	<b>Ripen on counter, then store in fridge.</b> Store out of direct sunlight.
 <b>Tropical fruit</b> (kiwi, pineapple, mangoes)	<b>Ripen on counter, then store in fridge.</b> Store loose.
 <b>Zucchini</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Wrap whole or sliced pieces in a damp towel.

For a complete database of food storage tips and their shelf lives, check out [StillTasty.com](http://StillTasty.com) or [EatByDate.com](http://EatByDate.com).



### Apart is better than together

Many fruits give off natural gases that cause nearby produce to ripen and spoil faster. Store fruits such as ripe bananas, avocados, apples and tomatoes away from other produce. Store veggies and fruit in separate fridge drawers.



### Spruce up limp greens

Immerse in ice water for 30 minutes or place upright in a glass of water for a few hours.



### Keep ready-to-eat snacks cool

Always refrigerate cut or peeled produce. Store in clear containers so you can see what's inside.