



## Product Dates

Have you noticed dates and numbers on many of the foods you buy? Have you wondered what those dates mean? Different dates have different meanings and they can be confusing.

There are two types of dates on food products, code dating and open dating.

Code dating is when the information is coded in letters, numbers and symbols so only the manufacturer can translate it. One type of code dating is product code. This code allows the manufacturer to include a large amount of information in a small space. It tells when and where a product was packaged. This is very useful in the case of a food recall. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) encourages manufacturers to put product codes on packaging.

Open dating is stated as Oct. 15 or 10-15. This is easy for you to read, but you still need to know what the date means.



Open dating is used for several different purposes including:

- ❑ Pull date or Sell by date. This is the last day that the manufacturer recommends that the product remain for sale. Usually the date allows for additional storage and use time at home.
- ❑ Quality assurance or freshness date. This date shows how long the manufacturer thinks a food will be of optimal quality. On the label, it may appear "Best if used by October 15, 2005." This does not mean that the product should not be used after the suggested date, but the quality may have changed.
- ❑ Pack date. This is the date the food was packaged or processed. It may help you determine how old a product is. Fresh meat and sometimes fruit is labeled with a pack date. For example you may not want to purchase ground meat that was packaged two days ago when there is one that was packaged today.

- ❑ Expiration date. This is the last day on which a product should be eaten. State governments regulate these dates for perishable items, such as milk and eggs. The FDA only regulates the expiration dates of infant formula. This is a date when food is no longer flavorful, useful or safe. Discard food that has passed the expiration date. Understanding the dates on food can help you make the best use of the money you spend on food and ensure that your food is safe to eat.

## OCTOBER IS PASTA MONTH

Pasta comes in many interesting shapes and sizes. It is easy to combine with vegetables and a small amount of meat for a one-dish meal. Pasta month is a good time to try a new pasta. Why not try whole-wheat pasta. Whole-wheat pasta will add more fiber as well as a different flavor and texture to your favorite recipes.

BE CREATIVE - try something new.

## Fruit Crisp

Fall is a wonderful time of year to make a flavorful warm fruit crisp. This is a recipe for a small crisp, big enough for two servings.

Two apples, peaches or pears, peeled and sliced

3 Tablespoons rolled oats

2 Tablespoons packed brown sugar

1 Tablespoons all-purpose flour

¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon

1-1/2 Tablespoons margarine or butter

Place sliced fruit in a small baking dish.

For topping combine the oats, brown sugar, flour and cinnamon. Cut in margarine or butter till mixture resembles coarse crumbs.

Sprinkle topping over fruit. Bake at 375°F for 30 minutes or until fruit is tender and topping is golden. Makes 2 servings.

Nutrition Information per serving:

210 calories, 6 gms fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 75 mg sodium, 39 gms carbohydrate, 4 gms fiber.

