

## WSGW RADIO PRESENTATION

### “Date Marking”

October 23, 2018

The dates on food labeling can be confusing. The truth is they often have nothing to do with food safety, but rather the food quality. A report by the Harvard Food Law and Policy clinic found that the vast majority of Americans misinterpret food labels and throw out perfectly good food.

If you throw out food based on the “sell by” date you are not alone. The study found that 90% of consumers do just that. Yet keeping food past that date does not mean that it’s unsafe. The “sell by” date is used by manufacturers to let grocery stores know they should not sell the food past that date simply to ensure that it still has some shelf life after the consumer purchases it.

“Best before” and “use by” dates don’t mean you should toss that food away. Those labels typically indicate the manufacturer’s estimate of when the food will be past its peak for quality. But again, that does not mean the food is unsafe.

There is no standard that establishes those dates. Laws vary by state to state and manufacturers have their own rules for setting those dates. **Infant formula is the only product for which the date on the label is federally regulated.**

Date marking for restaurants is a means for controlling the growth of *Listeria monocytogenes*, a bacteria that continues to grow even at refrigerated temperatures. Date marking is a process assuring that food is discarded before these bacteria can cause foodborne illness. In a food service establishment, potentially hazardous food must be discarded within 7 days from the day of food prep or the day food is opened.

On our website you can find 6 food safety videos that were created with a food safety grant from MDARD. Each video addresses a specific violation in the Food Code, with one of these videos focusing on date marking. **If you watch the video, please click on the link to take the evaluation survey.**

At [www.stilltasty.com](http://www.stilltasty.com) you’ll find safety and storage recommendations for nearly every food product in your home.

If at any time you’re not sure if food is still safe to eat, remember – ***“When in doubt throw it out!”***

Sources: Money Talks News  
Michigan Food Law 2000

[www.saginawpublichealth.org](http://www.saginawpublichealth.org)