

Food Labelling & Shelf Life

Good Hygiene Practice
Guide: 5

| PRODUCT | DATE | TIME | DISCARD ON DATE | TIME | INITIALS |
|---------------------|------|------|--------------------|------|----------|
| DECANTED/ OPENED | | | | | |
| REFRIGERATED | | | | | |
| FROZEN | | | | | |
| DEFROSTED | | | | | |

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Legal Requirements

The Food Labelling Regulations apply to the sale of all foods. For packaged foods this includes the name of the food, a list of ingredients, allergen information, net quantity, storage conditions, date labelling and name and address of the manufacturer.

It is a strict offence to sell or possess for sale any food past its stated Use By date

Definitions – Date Labelling

- **Use By**
A Use-By date is about food safety and is required for perishable foods that have a short life and require temperature control. It is an offence to sell or possess for sale any foodstuff with an expired 'use by' date.
- **Best Before**
The Best Before date is about quality, not safety and is generally applied to foods that have a longer shelf life, such as frozen food, dry goods and tinned food.
- **Discard On**
This is the date applied to unit produced or decanted foods to assist with stock rotation and control. Foods must be discarded at the end of this date.

Definitions – Date Labelling

- **Natural**
The product must contain natural ingredients. Examples: ingredients produced by nature, with no artificial additives or chemicals.
- **Traditional**
Only applies where a recipe that has existed for a significant period is used.
- **Authentic**
Terms like 'authentic', 'real' and 'genuine' can only be used to emphasise geographic origin or describe a recipe to emphasise the purity of single ingredients. Example: authentic Devon toffees.
- **Homemade**
Means that the meal is prepared on the premises, from simple ingredients, in a way that reflects a typical domestic situation and involves some basic cooking preparation. If an apple pie is described as homemade, but it has been bought in as a frozen pie, then this is a misleading description.
- **Farmhouse**
Can only be used to describe foods produced on a farm or to the same quality and style as that likely to be produced on a farm. Example: the description of a style of bread.
- **Fresh**
Can only be used if the product is actually fresh. Frozen or thawed meat cannot be described as fresh.
- **Pure:** Can only be applied to a single ingredient food to which nothing has been added. There are some specific exceptions concerning fruit juice and preserve spreads.

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Labelling – Open Counter Foods

There is no legal requirement to label open food served at a counter however Compass recommends this is undertaken to aid the customer's choice and help with marketing and pricing of the food offer.

The Food Information Regulations (2014) also require accurate information to be made available regarding any of the known 14 allergens present within any food served. See GHP13: Allergens for more information.

Any nutritional claim made on food labelling needs to have a clear recipe change from the normal offer to validate the claim, e.g. reduced fat / salt / sugar.



Labelling – Bought In Food

Bought in, pre-packaged foods or retail ready food items will have been fully labelled by the manufacturer. These products must only be purchased from Compass approved suppliers. Shelf life dates must not be changed or altered.



Labelling – Pre-Packed In Unit Made Food

Food made and pre-packaged on site e.g. sandwiches, wraps, yoghurt pots, and intended to be sold at the same unit is called Pre-Packaged for Direct Sale (PPDS) and labelling requirements are covered in GHP 21: Natasha's Law. This also includes pre-packaged food made in a unit and intended to be taken home for consumption. This is a legal requirement in UK & NI and shall be adopted by ROI as best practice.

The food label must include, the name of the food, storage conditions, shelf life expiry date, any nutritional claim made, a full ingredient list and allergen information. It is illegal to sell food without the appropriate and full label.



Labelling – In Unit Made & Sold At Another Location

If food is made in your unit but then sold at another location or outside of your immediate catering operation e.g. vending, then the following label information must be applied:

- The name and address of the food business
- An accurate description of the food product
- The storage conditions needed - e.g. keep refrigerated
- The shelf life expiry date
- A list of ingredients
- Full allergen listing
- Any nutritional information



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Shelf Life – Bought In Food

Most food products produced by manufacturers will have a shelf life date, stating either a Use By or a Best Before date. This ensures that they are consumed within a period when they are safe and of good quality. For these dates to be accurate and to ensure product safety and quality, all manufacturing recommendations regarding the storage, handling and processing of the food items must be followed.

Compass Rules:

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Use By | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not use ANY foodstuffs past its 'Use By' date. Use By' dates relate to food safety and food must not be cooked, sold, frozen, consumed or used in any way past this date. It is illegal to sell any food that has passed its 'Use By' date. |
| Best Before | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Best Before' dates relate to food quality and food is safe to eat after this date, depending upon the taste, texture and general quality of foods. Products with a 'best before' date may be used beyond this date, unless client site rules require 'best before' dates to be stringently observed. Apply a "would I eat it' check to determine if o.k. to use. |
| Fresh Fruit, Veg & Salad | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For open fruit, vegetables and salads that do not have a date label, a regular visual check for quality must be used to determine when products should be discarded |
| Dry Goods | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most dry food products usually have a long life. Store under suitable conditions, with an effective stock rotation system, (1st In / 1st Out) Opening dry goods packaging does not normally affect its shelf life. However, always check the manufacturer's label and follow any instructions relating to storage and shelf life after opening. Where possible keep products in the original packaging so that information on shelf life, storage, allergens etc is retained If the contents of opened packs are decanted into containers, use the Company approved food storage label to transfer the product information, including the shelf life |
| Eggs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fresh shell hens' eggs purchased from the nominated suppliers carry the Lion Quality mark on the eggshell and have a shelf life of 21 days from the date of laying. In ROI follow manufacturer's instructions. Other fresh types of eggs, e.g. duck, quail eggs must be kept refrigerated at all times after delivery and used within the shelf life stated by the supplier on the box |
| Modified Atmosphere Packaging | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some manufactured high-risk products have an extended shelf life, due to the special conditions they are produced and packed in. Shelf life may be up to 20 days or more. Once the pack is opened, the extended shelf life will no longer apply and the manufacturer's instructions must be followed. If there are no manufacturer's instructions, the product must be used within 72hrs or within the date on the packaging if shorter. |
| Canned Products | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As soon as canned foods and specially wrapped and sealed ambient products are opened, follow the manufacturer's instructions regarding shelf life |
| Fresh Fish | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fresh fish delivered into a unit has a maximum of 2 days - the day of delivery plus 1 day. |
| Frozen Foods | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foods received from the manufacturer in frozen condition will have a Best Before date and must be defrosted and used before expiry of this date. Products received in a chilled condition may be suitable for freezing, which will be indicated on the manufacturer's label. You must freeze bought in foods no later than 3 days prior to the manufacturers Use By date to allow sufficient time to defrost and use the product |
| Sauces and Dressings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchased sauces & dressings have relatively long manufacturer shelf life until opened. Once opened, follow the manufacturer's storage and shelf life instructions. |

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Shelf Life – In Unit Made Food

Includes all high risk foods, such as cooked meats, prepared salads, dairy based dishes, sauces, prepared meat, poultry or fish dishes, cooked pasta and rice. An overview of the below rules is available on the Shelf Life Storage posters which can be ordered from Linney MyStore

Compass Rules:

- **Cakes & Baked Goods**
 - All dry cakes and baked goods should have a shelf life of no more than 7 days and should be kept in a dry moisture free environment to maintain the quality of the item.
 - Any cakes containing cream, custard ganache etc, should be given a shelf life of 72 hrs and be refrigerated
- **Sandwiches & Rolls**
 - Apply a shelf life of 2 days, including the day of production.
- **Chilled / Ready To Eat**
 - Wrap or store in sealed containers
 - Date code with a shelf life of 72 hrs.
- **Cooked food chilled for later use**
 - Cool foods quickly, where possible in a blast chiller and apply a shelf life of 72 hours
- **Cooked Whole Joints**
 - Whole joints of meat (Turkey, Beef, Gammon) can be cooked, blast chilled on a Friday and then sliced on Monday for lunch service either hot or cold, with any left overs discarded.
 - Refer to the Compass Hazard Analysis Record for further details.
- **Freezing In Unit Made Foods**
 - Foods made and frozen in the catering unit should be produced strictly in accordance with the procedures outlined in Good Hygiene Practice Guide No.6: Food Deliveries & Storage.
 - Cool and freeze food on day of production
 - Apply a Compass food and allergen label, indicating the date it was frozen and a 'Discard Date' shelf life of no more than 6 months (3 months in Ireland) forward from the date of freezing plus any allergens noted from the recipe card (see Good Hygiene Practice Guide 13: Allergens)
 - Defrost fully and use within remaining shelf life.
- **Jams and Chutneys**
 - Where recipes guarantee a >38% sugar content and there is a cooking step of at least 10 minutes at 90 a shelf life of 3 months can be applied to sealed products.
 - Foods must be stored in sterilised jars or be vacuum packed.
 - Once opened apply a 7-day shelf life.
- **Salad dressings**
 - Where recipes guarantee a pH of < 4.3 a shelf life of two weeks can be applied to refrigerated products.
- **Pickles**
 - Where recipes guarantee a pH of < 4.3 a shelf life of 3 months can be applied to refrigerated products.
 - Foods must be stored in sterilised jars or be vacuum packed.
 - Once opened apply a 1-month shelf life.
- **Flavoured Oils**
 - Apply a shelf life of 1 month



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Checks

The following checks are to be undertaken in order to ensure compliance to the above Compass rules:

- **Food Delivery Checks** must include a check of the product label to ensure a sufficient shelf life is available to fit in with your menu schedule. All problems with expired or short shelf life must be reported to Commercial Support Line.
- Daily observation of food used for the preparation and cooking of meals for out of date food
- All ready to eat foods within storage are checked daily at end of service and logged on the **Closing HSE Checklist**
- All foods with Best Before dates are checked and recorded on the **Qly HSE Checklist**

Compass Food Storage Label

Whenever transferring shelf life dates or other product information from the outer packaging or the food manufacturer's label, only the approved Compass food storage label must be used.

The label is available from Linney My Store (Product code: CO20_LAB_STCK_024074)

| FOOD SAFETY & ALLERGENS | Product: _____ | | | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------|------|-----------------|-----------------|----------|--|
| | DATE | TIME | DISCARD ON DATE | DISCARD ON TIME | INITIALS | |
| | DECANTED/ OPENED | | | | | |
| | REFRIGERATED | | | | | |
| | FROZEN | | | | | |
| DEFROSTED | | | | | | |

This item contains the following allergens

| | | | |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Peanuts | <input type="checkbox"/> Fish | <input type="checkbox"/> Soya | <input type="checkbox"/> Mustard |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nuts | <input type="checkbox"/> Eggs | <input type="checkbox"/> Sesame Seeds | <input type="checkbox"/> Lupin |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cereals containing gluten | <input type="checkbox"/> Milk | <input type="checkbox"/> Celery | <input type="checkbox"/> Sulphur |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Molluscs | <input type="checkbox"/> Cereals containing gluten | | |

Compass Rules

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Decanted / Opened | Products transferred from the manufacturer's original packaging or opened must be stored and labelled in accordance with the manufacturers after opening instructions. This may state 'refrigerate after opening' or 'use with 7 days / 2 weeks of opening'. If no instructions are given, the product can be used until the expiry of the manufacturer's Best Before date. |
| Refrigerated | Perishable foods must have a limited shelf life and must be refrigerated. This is normally 72hrs for in unit produced foods (or 2 days for in unit made sandwiches and rolls, salads, yogurt pots etc). Opened packaged food or food transferred from the manufacturer's original packaging must be stored and labelled in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Instructions may state 'refrigerate after opening' and/or 'use with 48hrs / 7 days of opening' |
| Frozen | Bought in foods may be suitable for freezing if the manufacturer states this and gives storage guidance e.g. 'suitable for freezing' - 'If frozen use within 6 months' (3 months in Ireland). Chilled products cooked in unit can be frozen for up to 6 months |
| Defrosted | Frozen food should be defrosted in a refrigerator and used within the remaining shelf life |

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Examples

| Product: Coleslaw | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-------|------|----------------------|-----|----------|
| | DATE | TIME | DISCARD ON DATE TIME | | INITIALS |
| DECANTED/ OPENED | 18/11 | 2pm | 25/11 | 2pm | DTW |
| REFRIGERATED | | | | | |
| FROZEN | | | | | |
| DEFROSTED | | | | | |

A container of coleslaw was opened on the 18th November and the manufacturer's label stated "once opened refrigerate and use within 7 days". This information is then transferred to the Compass food label

| Product: Roast Beef | | | | | |
|----------------------------|-------|------|----------------------|-----|----------|
| | DATE | TIME | DISCARD ON DATE TIME | | INITIALS |
| DECANTED/ OPENED | | | | | |
| REFRIGERATED | 18/11 | 3pm | 21/11 | 3pm | DTW |
| FROZEN | | | | | |
| DEFROSTED | | | | | |

Roast beef was cooked on the 18th November then cooled at 3pm and refrigerated for use in sandwiches. The roast beef must be used within 72hrs of cooling and therefore discarded on 21st November at 3pm.

| Product: Chicken Soup | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-------|------|----------------------|-----|----------|
| | DATE | TIME | DISCARD ON DATE TIME | | INITIALS |
| DECANTED/ OPENED | | | | | |
| REFRIGERATED | | | | | |
| FROZEN | 18/02 | 3pm | 18/08 | 3pm | DTW |
| DEFROSTED | | | | | |

Chicken soup is prepared on the 18th February and then cooled and frozen on the same day.

The soup must be used within 6 months (3 months in Ireland) of freezing therefore discarded on the 18th August

| Product: Chicken Soup | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-------|------|----------------------|------|----------|
| | DATE | TIME | DISCARD ON DATE TIME | | INITIALS |
| DECANTED/ OPENED | | | | | |
| REFRIGERATED | | | | | |
| FROZEN | | | | | |
| DEFROSTED | 18/08 | 10am | 21/08 | 10am | DTW |

The chicken soup is removed from the freezer at 10am on the 18th August and defrosted in a refrigerator. The soup must be used within 72hrs of removal from the freezer and discarded on 21st August at 10am. The soup must be re-heated only once and discarded if unsold

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Healthcare Allergen Labelling

Within patient dining situations it is important to clearly communicate to the patient and ward nurse what allergens the patient can not eat and therefore we require to use a bespoke allergen label. This will identify what allergens are **excluded** within their meal.

This label can be obtained from Linney MyStore (CO21_LAB_STCK_029348)

The form is titled 'ALLERGEN' and includes fields for Date, Product/Dish, Guest Name, and Room No. Below these fields, it states: 'This item has been prepared to remove the following allergen/intolerance risk'. It lists various allergens with radio button options: Peanuts, Nuts, Crustaceans (Shellfish), Molluscs (Shellfish), Fish, Eggs, Milk, Cereals (Containing Gluten), Soya, Sesame Seeds, Celery, Mustard, Lupin, and Sulphur. There is also a field for 'Other (diet grid / patient specified):'. The form number CO21_LAB_STCK_029348 is visible at the bottom right.

Shelf Life – Day Dot System

Compass Guidance:

If your unit makes their own retail ready food items such as sandwiches and salad items and uses a day dot labelling system then the following should be applied:

- Day dot stickers should not be used in conjunction with the Compass food storage label (page 6) as this may lead to confusion or conflicting information
- Day Dot stickers are most suitable for retail ready items held in storage display for more than 1 day
- Apply the day dot sticker to the underside of the food item
- Ensure the day dot sticker represents the last day of its shelf life and not the day of production. For example if the sandwich was made on a Monday morning then the day dot sticker should be for Tuesday
- Day dot stickers can be obtained via Linney My Store (Mon - Fri or 7 day versions)
- Ensure all high risk in unit made food items are stored under refrigerated conditions below +8°C
- Check the Day Dot sticker on all in unit made food items during replenishment, and remove any items which have gone past the day printed on the sticker. For example when replenishing stock on Wednesday if a sandwich with a Tuesday Day Dot sticker is found please remove from sale and destroy.



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Additional Guidance

1. Delivery checks
 - Refer to **Good Hygiene Practice Guide No: 6 - Food Receipt & Storage** for guidance regarding the date code checks to undertake when receiving food deliveries
2. Food labelling on service / hospitality
 - Refer to **Good Hygiene Practice Guide No 11 - Food Service** for guidance regarding food labelling on counter service / hospitality / vending
3. Allergen labelling
 - Refer to **Good Hygiene Practice Guide No 13 - Allergens** for guidance regarding allergen food labelling and Natasha's Law

