



LOCATION: CLASSROOM | SUGGESTED DURATION: THREE HOURS.

Food Waste is Dated!

STUDENT GOALS

- I understand the difference between use by and best before dates.
- I know how to take a survey.
- I am beginning to understand how to use research in design.

CURRICULUM LINKS

- Consumer and financial literacy.
- Knowledge and understanding about the nature of food systems.
- Informed and appropriate food preparation choices when experimenting with, preparing, consuming, and disposing of food in a sustainable manner.
- Understanding the nutritional quality of food and the environmental impact of food manufacturing processes, consumption and waste.

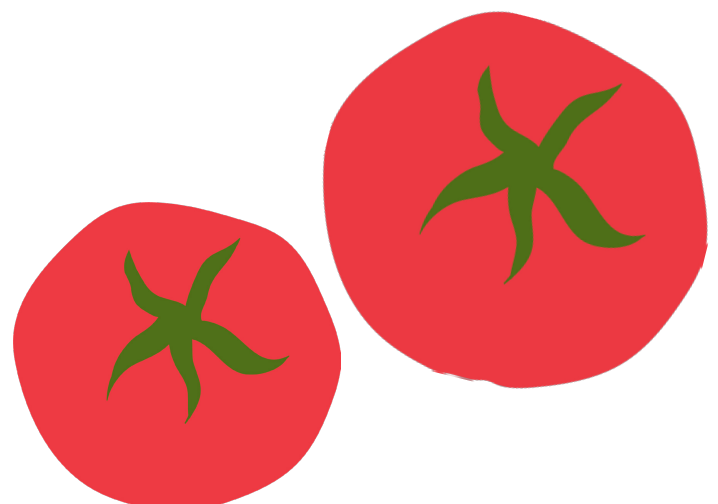
When you go to the supermarket and pick up any product, it will have one of two dates on them. It will either have a 'best before' or a 'use by date'. Do you know the difference?

It turns out that not many people in Australia know the difference between these two labels. Researchers from End Food Waste Australia found that confusion between the two is common. And because people are not sure of the difference, they are throwing out lots of food they could've safely eaten.

DID YOU KNOW?

Best before dates are about **quality**. Foods eaten after best before dates are not dangerous. They may not taste as good, but they may also be fine. Officially, if a food has a shelf life over two years, it doesn't need to have a best before date on it at all. It's safe to use your senses (smell, taste, touch, and sight) to check if the food is good to eat.

Use by dates are about **safety**. Foods eaten after use by dates could make you sick.





LOCATION: CLASSROOM | SUGGESTED DURATION: THREE HOURS.

Food Waste is Dated!

EXERCISE ONE: SURVEYING THE SUPERMARKET

First, collect your data. Make a list of foods that you think would last more than two years.

Then, go to your local supermarket and check if those foods have best before dates. Make a list as you go.

Now, analyse your data. Are there any products that have a best before date when it doesn't need to? Why would manufacturers do this?

EXERCISE TWO: COMMUNICATING DATA

Science and science communication go hand in hand. You can use the techniques of the human sciences (such as sociology) to find out what people know, and what they need to know. This information can then be used to make a design that tells people what they need to know, in a way that is easy for them to understand.

Let's start by doing a foundational technique of that is used to collect data for the human sciences – the survey.

1. Write your survey. You'll need to ask the participants:

- What they understand the difference between use by and best before dates to be.
- What information they'd really like to know when they buy food with use by or best before dates
- If they have any design ideas on how they'd like that information communicated (for example, would they like the date to be written bigger, or should it always be in the same spot, or do they want to know when it was made, rather than when it 'should' be used by)

You can also add any other questions you'd like to know, but remember the longer the survey, the harder it is to get people to do it.

2. Get people to take the survey. We would suggest about twenty participants. The best way to record results is literally to voice record it as well as taking notes as you go. That way you can listen to it again if you forget what someone said. You need to tell people that you are recording the survey and why you are doing the interview. This can be simple as saying: "I'm doing a survey for my school work. Would you mind if I recorded our interview? I will only use what you say to help my schoolwork".

3. Look at the results and start to analyse your data. Are there any patterns emerging? What do you think the important pieces of information are? How would you make those pieces of information most obvious on the label?

4. Now compare your data. Have a look at your results in comparison to the results RMIT researchers found, which is in the 'further resources' section of this pack. Are they similar? Or really different? If they are different, can you think why?



LOCATION: CLASSROOM | SUGGESTED DURATION: THREE HOURS.

Food Waste is Dated!

EXERCISE TWO: COMMUNICATING DATA (CONT.)

5. Have a look at the prototype labels that were developed as part of the National Date Labelling and Storage Advice – Phase 1. These are not real date labels: they are just researchers trying out a design to see if they can make important information clearer. Can you see how they do this? For example, what is big? What is small? Why would they use pictures as well as words?



RESOURCES

<https://www.rmit.edu.au/news/all-news/2024/sep/date-labels>

https://endfoodwaste.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/EFWA_124_DateLabel_ConsumerInterviewInsightsReport.pdf

<https://endfoodwaste.com.au/national-date-labelling-and-storage-advice-phase-1/>

<https://nt.gov.au/industry/hospitality/accommodation-and-food-businesses/food-safety-and-regulations/labelling/best-before-and-use-by-explained>

6. Ok, so now it's time to try drawing your own date label! After you do a draft, show it to some people to see if it works. This is how good design works!



Recipes For Food That's About to Go!

STALE TURKISH BREAD CROUTONS

FRESH FROM THE GARDEN:

Garlic.

SEASON:

All year.

SERVES:

30 tastes in the classroom, or six serves at home.

Use these simple croutons to add variety and texture to salads, or serve as slices with dips such as hummus, salsa, beetroot dip or raita. Can be done with any bread really!

Equipment

oven
chopping board
bread knife
clean tea towel
metric measuring cups
pastry brush
baking trays
tongs or spatula

What to do:

1. Preheat oven to 200 degrees celcius.
2. Prepare all of the ingredients as per ingredients list.
3. Brush both sides of each slice of bread lightly with oil.
4. Cut the slices into clubs, or leave as slices if using to serve with dips.
5. Spread the bread out on baking trays.
6. Lightly crush garlic, but don't peel it. Add to the tray with the bread.
7. Cook for 10 minutes. Check and turn the croutons during this time, using tongs or a spatula.
8. Remove the trays from the oven when the croutons are golden brown.
9. Serve the croutons on leafy salad or soup, or serve as slices with dips.

For the croutons:

1 stale Turkish bread loaf, cut into 1cm thick slices

1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil.

1 or 2 garlic cloves, unpeeled



Recipes For Food That's About to Go!

VIMLA'S VERY RIPE TOMATO CHUTNEY

FRESH FROM THE GARDEN:

Tomatoes, coriander, chilli and onion.

SEASON:

Late Summer/early Autumn.

SERVES:

30 tastes in the classroom, or six serves at home.

Equipment

clean tea towel
chopping board
cook's knife
medium-sized mixing bowl
mixing spoon
serving bowl

For the chutney:

4 very ripe medium tomatoes,
quartered

1 small handful of coriander
leaves, finely chopped

2 onions, finely chopped

2 long red chillies, de-seeded
and finely chopped

1/4 teaspoon, to taste

In Fiji, times can be very difficult and food is never wasted.

Traditionally, the farmers in the villages picked the choice tomatoes for market and saved the damaged ones for home.

The best way to use these damaged tomatoes was to squeeze them, season them and add a few other tasty ingredients to give some extra flavour – hence this dish.

What to do:

1. Prepare all of the ingredients as per ingredients list.
2. Add all the ingredients to a mixing bowl.
3. With clean hands, squeeze the tomatoes until all the juice has been extracted, and the mixture forms a rough sauce.
4. Transfer the finished chutney to the serving bowl.
5. Serve as a condiment with steamed rice and other curries.



Food Waste is Dated:

Further resources

Findings from RMIT research into date labelling

The following is from pages 34-35 of the Date Labelling and Storage Advice: Consumer Interviews report.

“Date labels and storage advice systems are often unclear and confusing to participants. The majority of participants wanted clearer information to help them make decisions about food safety, storage, and disposal. Four key messages were highlighted from the discussions with consumers:

Date labels are not straightforward:

- There were different perceptions regarding date labels in the low-risk and the high-risk categories. For the low-risk categories, consumers want to be in charge of the decision, while in the high-risk categories, they wanted to strictly follow the date labels
- In the Bakery category, participants preferred a “Baked on” date over “Best before” or “Use by”
- Participants would prefer to have clear information provided that reflects the age of the products or how long the product will last. For example, “Harvested on X” or “Consume within X days after opening”
- Date labels were not perceived as reliable or trustworthy for warmer and more humid climates like in Queensland and the Northern Territory

The “Best before” and “Use by” conundrum:

- “Best before” and “Use by” date labels do not provide enough decision-making information to consumers on their own, supplemental information would be helpful (e.g., QR codes)
- While some participants could reasonably differentiate between the “Best before” and “Use by”, they often used both terms interchangeably
- Consumers are confused with all the variations and options of date labels, especially across the different categories
- Date tags that were attached separately from the packaging or printed on easily detachable parts of the packaging could be lost once the package was opened

- Placement, legibility, font size, format, and colour are issues. Participants suggested consistent placement and increased contrast (using bolder and larger sized fonts and high contrast colours) to improve visual standout and make date labels and storage advice easier to read

Storage advice is incomplete and insufficient

- Freezing and thawing advice need to be explicit, especially for meat and seafood. It should include information such as whether products can be frozen, the ideal temperature, for how long, and what consumers should do after that
- Storage advice needs to be reflective of different climate conditions
- Loose fruits and vegetables do not have date labels and storage advice, but additional information could be provided at the Point of Sale”