

# The Dating Game: Interpreting and Understanding Food Dating



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# This Presentation Addresses



- “Coded” vs. “Calendar” dating
- Pack/Sell/Use By dates
- Extenuating circumstances
- USDA purchase realities
- General guidelines



# What is Food Dating?



- **Open Dating** (calendar date) must include:
  - ✓ Month, day (and year if stable or frozen)
  - ✓ A phrase explaining the meaning
- **Closed Dating** (coded dating) numbers for use by the manufacturer (example: Julian code)

# Julian Code: Example



## **Product Recall - September 6 , 2006:**

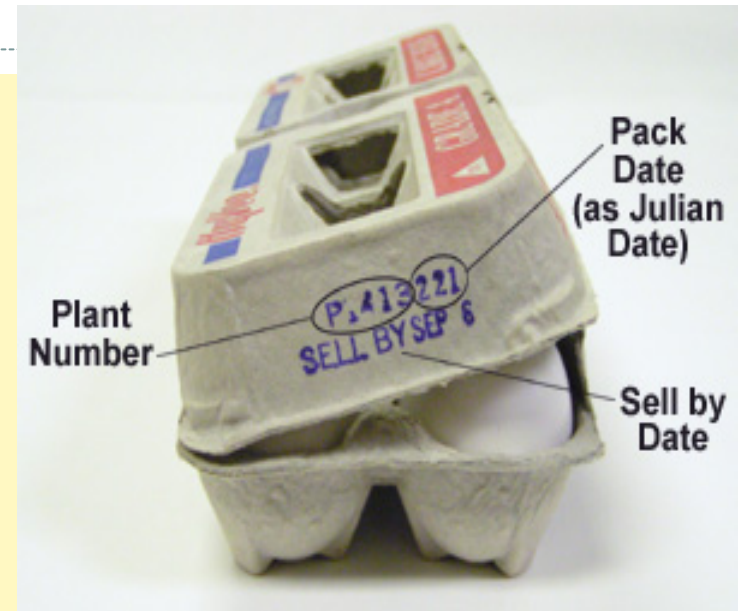
Kid Connection Nacho Flavored Tortilla chips as a component in Kid Connection variety snack sacks, 1 ounce packages with Julian code dates of 17706 to 19106 distributed nationally by WAL-MART.

- 17706 = June 26, 2006
- 19106 = July 10, 2006

# Types of Food Dates



- “Pack” Date – Date item packed (Aug. 9<sup>th</sup>)
- “Sell by” Date – How long a retailer should display and sell product
- “Use by” Date – Date recommended by manufacturer for peak quality — not a safety date!



# Types of Food Dates



- USDA discontinued BIUB charts in 2000
- BIUB guidance can be found on the FNS FDD web site at:



<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/facts/biubguidance.htm>

# Additional Quality Factors ...



- **Inventory best practices**
  - FIFO vs. FISH
- **Handling**
  - How many warehouses has product been in?
- **Exposure time**
  - How long on loading docks?
- **Temperature**





Fresh Frozen



# USDA Purchase Realities



- Seasonal harvests – pack dates reflect last harvest cycle
  - Peas: June → August
  - Snap Beans: July → Sept
  - Corn: August → October
- Surplus removal – pack dates may reflect pack from two previous harvest cycles



# USDA Purchase Realities



- “Buy American” requirement
- Notify recipients about “unexpected dates” and order accordingly...
- Assure warehouses practice FIFO (First-In-First-Out)...



# General Guidelines



- **High acid foods**—such as canned tomatoes and pineapple, have a relatively shorter usage time
- **Low acid foods**—such as canned vegetables, meat, and poultry, have a longer usage time if stored in cool, clean, dry conditions



# General Guidelines



- **Frozen foods**—must be maintained at 0° F or below and have a relatively shorter usage time



*Good day sir! Have you a room with a large walk-in freezer?*

# Questions?

