FOOD DATING/CODING

General Information

Expiration dates on food and drink products are generally not required or regulated by Federal administrators (with the exception of infant formula). Dates printed on food containers telling us when to purchase, eat or throw out food are actually decided by individual manufacturers. Complicating matters, the printed numbers can mean multiple things and there's no continuity between types of products!

Below is information from the USDA to help clear up any confusion.

- *Sell-By* >> This number is used by the store to let employers know how long a certain product can stay on the shelf. It does not indicate the safety of the item.
- *Best if Used Before/By* >> This date helps specify when a product is at its peak freshness. It does not indicate the safety of the item.
- Use-By >> These dates indicate when a product will start deteriorating in quality and flavor. Again, it's not a safety guide!
- *Closed / coded dates* >> These are packing codes that track the product's shipment. These codes are typically a series of numbers and letters representing dates and times the container was filled, as well as places of manufacture. (They look something like 045B97 April 11, 2008.) They should not be interpreted as "use-by" dates.

Second Harvest Co-op Product

Second Harvest purchases much of our canned items from Vietti Foods. Below is information regarding codes on those particular cases and individual cans. Type in color is for informational purposes only and is not actually printed on the case.

How to read information on the CASE:

  (1) 24/7.5oz   **(2)** Southgate Chili w/Beans   **(3)** 10-100   **(4)** 055221
  (5) 71846 92242   **(6)** 1-5   **(7)** G2512   **(8)** 7/25/12

(1)   Description of the number of cans contained in the case and the weight per can
(2)   Product name
(3)   Vietti formula number
(4)   Time product was put into case; military format
(5)   Product UPC
(6)   Retort number in which product was processed
(7)   Can code of product contained in case (refer to can code info below)
(8)   Date product was produced

How to read information on the CAN:

C2211 70101   09:35 EST 642 could be read as follows.

- The first letter represents the month, starting with A for January. Skip the letter "i".
- The 2nd and 3rd characters represent the day of the month.
- The 4th and 5th characters represent the last two digits of the year.
- The next five numbers represent a unique product code used to determine product type.
- 09:35 is the time the can was filled using military format
- EST 642 or EST P642 represents the unique USDA identification number for beef or poultry.
- For this example, the can was produced on March 22, 2011 at 9:35 in the morning and contains Pasta Twirls with Beef.

Canned goods do not have an expiration date and are safe to consume for many years if the can is intact. For best quality, Vietti Foods recommend you use Vietti products within 4 years.

The Product Lot Code used on Second Harvest product is an open code (two digit month followed by a two digit day followed by a two digit year followed by a three digit batch number).

Example: Product Lot Code of 070110101
070110 = July 01, 2010 and 101 = Batch number ran on production date of July 01, 2010