



# APPLES: Food Dates

Agency Partners and Programs Learning and Education Sessions

October 29 & November 3, 2021

# Food Dates: The Terrific Trio



**Ian Steele** (he/him/his)

*Food Resourcing Manager*

Responsible for bringing food in and sourcing the mix of items available to order and distribute.



**Steve Rodriguez** (he/him/his)

*Inventory Manager*

Responsible for receiving food into inventory, managing inventory and the mix of items available on Agency Express, and working with Product Recovery on items that need to be repackaged into individual and family-sized portions.



**Scott Lyon** (he/him/his)

*Quality Assurance Manager*

Responsible for checking food for quality control and food safety training and practices in the distribution center, transportation, and the clean rooms where food is sorted and repacked.

## *Food Resourcing: Extension Hierarchy*

- CY21 72% of inbound product has been donated
- [Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Act](#)
- Extension Hierarchy:
  - National donors extensions
  - [FoodKeeper](#)
  - [Still Tasty](#)
  - Group Discussion



# Food Resourcing: Where it Comes From



## Bucket 1 **Donations**

Food manufacturers,  
wholesalers and vendors

Food 3PL companies

Food adjacent  
organizations

Vast majority of product  
from this bucket will be  
near or past code



## Bucket 2 **Purchased**

Food vendors,  
manufacturers or farms

Product will very likely  
never have code dates in  
question

*Exception being  
perishable items*



## Bucket 3 **Retail Recovery**

Product that an agency  
or SHFBSW picks up  
directly from a retailer

Assorted items that  
almost always will be  
near or past code



## Bucket 4 **Government Product**

Funding from  
government agencies  
(e.g. DATCP, CFAP,  
TEFAP)

Product will very likely  
never have code dates in  
question

# Inventory Management: Item Lifecycle

## STEP 1 : Receiving

Loads are inspected on arrival and an inspection sheet is filled out to document the information

- Donor identity
- Reason for the donation (E.G. regular donation, extra product, damaged product, refused delivery, etc.)
- Visual review of the product and transportation it arrived in
- Temperature of product

Incoming products come in many forms - the constant is the process we physically receive them

Safety is the number one priority when it comes to incoming (and outgoing) food

Based on the inspection we determine if we will or won't accept the product

Accepted products are unloaded, item numbers are created, and items are placed on Agency Express (AE)

# Inventory Management: Item Lifecycle

## STEP 2 : Inventory Management

### Weigh Items

Items that cannot be divided into a case form

- E.g.: Pet supplies
- Ordered on AE by the total LBS wanted (minimum amounts to order may apply)

### Case Items

Items that are the same product and in the same quantity together in a single box

- E.g. Kraft Macaroni and Cheese - 20) 7.5 OZ boxes per case
- Ordered on AE by the total number of cases wanted

### Needs Work Items

Items that “need to be worked” as a project by volunteers prior to being put on AE and distributed

- E.g.: Bulk onions that come in 50 LB bags or pastas received in bulk tote quantities that need to be sorted, portioned, labeled with ingredients, weighed, and/or packaged
- May be ordered on AE as a weigh or case item, depending on the best ordering and distribution strategy

# *Inventory Management: Item Lifecycle*

## **STEP 3** : Orders

### CERES & Agency Express Functionality

- CERES - SHFBSW and Feeding America's inventory management, ordering, and distribution system



# Inventory Management: Item Lifecycle

## STEP 3 : Orders

### Why do we reuse item numbers?

E.g.: Milk, eggs and produce (the most reused item numbers)

Allows agencies and programs to order more easily when item numbers aren't constantly changing

Collects data over time to better understand ordering history and item trends

Submits contractual item and category reporting via CERES to Feeding America

- 
- The history of what SHFB has ordered
  - The history of what agencies and programs have ordered
  - Improves the analysis of case and weigh items that are packaged the same
  - Increases the ability to forecast and maintain food quality via data
- Which types of foods are ordered at which rate, at which case size, at which quantity, at what time of year, etc.



# Inventory Management: Item Lifecycle

## STEP 3 : Orders

When don't we reuse item numbers?

When similar items are different products



5 LB bags of Idaho potatoes

VS



5 LB bags of Little Potato Co. potatoes

When similar items are different sizes



VS



1 gallon of milk

1/2 gallon of milk

35.3 OZ tub of plain Greek yogurt

VS

7 OZ cup of plain Greek yogurt

When similar items are different pack sizes and weights within in a case

(4) 1 gallon containers of milk per case

VS

(6) 1 gallon containers of milk per case

(6) 35.3 OZ tubs of Plain Greek yogurt per case

VS

(12) 7 OZ cups of plain Greek yogurt per tray

# Inventory Management: Item Lifecycle

## STEP 3 : Orders

### CERES & Agency Express Functionality

- Expiration & Consume by Dates
  - Each time an item is the same product, pack size and case size, it can be received under the existing item number
    - 501531 R-Milk, 1% Sassy Cow
  - Within an item number multiple lots of the item can be made for product received on different days
    - 501531 R-Milk, 1%, Sassy Cow
      - LOT001
      - LOT002
  - New donations of the item receive a new lot identification number (e.g. LOT003) and are added to the existing lots
    - 501531 R-Milk, 1%, Sassy Cow
      - LOT001
      - LOT002
      - LOT003



# Inventory Management: Item Lifecycle

## STEP 3 : Orders

### CERES & Agency Express Functionality continued

- Expiration & Consume by Dates
  - The lot identification number is where CERES tracks Best By and Consume By dates
    - 501531 R-Milk, 1%, Sassy Cow
      - LOT001 - Best By Date 11/15/21 & Consume By Date 11/22/21
      - LOT002 - Best By Date 11/29/21 & Consume By Date 12/6/21
      - LOT003 - Best By Date 12/13/21 & Consume By Date 12/20/21
    - CERES automatically selects from multiple lots the lot identification number with the soonest Best By or Consume By date to distribute it first
      - 501531 R-Milk, 1%, Sassy Cow
        - LOT001 - Best By Date 11/15/21 & Consume By Date 11/22/21



# Inventory Management: Item Lifecycle

## STEP 3 : Orders

### CERES & Agency Express Functionality cont.

- Expiration & Consume by Dates
  - Customized alerts in CERES notify how close a product is to it's Best By or Consume By dates
    - (12) 15 OZ cans/tray of Hormel Chili are 2 months away from their Best By date
    - 5 LB bags of apples are 7 days away from their Best By date
    - A case of milk is 3 weeks away from it's Consume By date
  - Reports are used to review and manage the quantity of items to determine how quickly we need to distribute them prior to the Best By and/or Consume By dates
  - Unfortunately CERES is unable to display the Best By or Consume By dates from the lots on AE as they are automatically selected as orders are placed



# Quality Assurance: Procedures & Training



## Daily QA and Inventory Teams Item Review

- Run report of current items in inventory
- Add blue QA label with date to pallet
- Identify poor quality produce and remove it from orders being picked
- Daily reviews of products in the distribution center to check for issues
- Communicate to Distribution Center Associates, Operations, Agency Services Coordinator/Order Manager and Product Recovery teams with next steps

# Quality Assurance: Procedures & Training

## Produce Boxes: Dane or SHFBSW

- Train Volunteer Project Coordinators and volunteers on acceptable and not acceptable food
- Monitor projects and engage with volunteers to make good choices and answer questions
  - Produce to last 5 days or more
  - Switch to packing boxes 1-2 days prior to distribution to lessen the effect of ethylene
  - Ethylene is a gas released by some fruits and vegetables that causes produce to ripen more quickly
    - Apples, bananas, melons, pears, avocados and peaches are examples of ethylene producers
    - Tomatoes are an example of moderate ethylene producers
    - Broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, cucumbers, onions and lettuce are examples of ethylene sensitive types of produce



## *Quality Assurance: Procedures & Training*

### Retail Recovery: Dry Goods, Frozen Meat, Produce & Cooler Items

- Use a variety of sorting guides ✓
- Check for packaging defects ✓
- Check for contaminants on packaging ✓
- Check for ingredients ✓
- Check the condition of the food ✓
- Check date and calculate consume by date ✓
- Sort into categories ✓



# Quality Assurance: Decoding Food Dates

## Closed or Coded Date

Date code used in manufacturing for when a product was packaged, item identification, and inventory management. **Not a food safety date.**

- Often used to track a product by location in a recall

## Expiration Date

Products may not function the same after the date listed.

- Examples: Over-the-counter (OTC) medications, baby formula, sunscreen, toothpaste, etc.





# Quality Assurance: Decoding Food Dates

## **Freeze-By Date**

Date that indicates when a product should be frozen to maintain peak quality. **Not a food safety date.**

## **Sell-By Date**

Date provided by the manufacturer to tell a store how long to display the product for sale. **Not a food safety date.**

## **Best If Used By/Best By/Best If Used Before Date**

Date that indicates when a product will be of peak quality. **Not a food safety date.**

## **Consume By Date**

Similar to Best If Used By Date. **Not a food safety date.**

Also used by SHFBSW to calculate the date after the Sell By Date or Best By Date that a product is safe and wholesome to eat if stored and handled properly and spoilage is not evident.



# *Quality Assurance: Food Date & Safety Resources*

**SHFB Food Date Guidelines**: Food date extension guidelines document for a wide variety of food categories and freezing best practices.

**FoodKeeper App**: Searchable database created by the USDA that provides food date extension guidelines for a variety of food categories.

**Still Tasty**: Searchable database that provides the shelf and freezer life for nearly every food or beverage found in the average kitchen. Created by a mother (food safety expert) and daughter (journalist) team. Excellent Q&A section.

## **Feeding America Can Defects Guide**

## **Food Bank for Southern Colorado Produce Sorting Guide**

## **ServSafe - Food Handler Training**

**Safe Produce for Food Pantries**: Many resources, handouts, and training documents available to food pantries to help distribute fresh, delicious produce. Created by the University of Wisconsin Extension.

## **Sight, Smell, Touch, and Taste methods**

# Quality Assurance: Helping Clients Navigate Food Dates

Share your knowledge...

- Explain that almost all food dates reference peak quality for products and not the safety of consuming products
- Talk about the dates on packages not always being the best method for determining food quality - sight, smell, touch and taste are equally valuable
- Discuss superficial visuals of produce or superficial defects in packaging that don't affect food quality
- Inform that eating food that's past Use By or Best By dates is still tasty and helps minimize food waste
- Share that you're helping to distribute food that might otherwise not be received by people
  - 3 billion LBS of food has been recovered via the Feeding America MealConnect Program
- Share the easy-to-use resources discussed today





# *Food Dates: Continuing the Conversation*

Are there any additional questions you'd like to ask?

Are there other ways we can help?

Is there any feedback about this APPLES session you'd like to provide? (We'll use it to improve future trainings and discussions.)

(If you do not have feedback now, please fill out the short survey about this session that will be sent to you via email.)



# *Food Dates: We're Here to Help*

If you have any questions or a specific situation to discuss - we're here to help!

Please contact your Agency Representative. They may be able to answer your question directly or will get in touch with the appropriate contact to respond.

We're here for you - whether that's responding via email, setting up a call or video call, or scheduling a site visit.

*Thank you!*

*- Ian, Steve, Scott, and the entire Agency Partners & Programs Team -*