



## THE DATING GAME



**Objective:** Members will be able to identify the meaning of food expiration labels.

**Discussion:** There are many types of date related food labels. Some and their meanings are listed below.

**"Use By," "Best if Used By," or "Quality Assurance"** - The last date the product is likely to be at peak flavor and quality. Often placed on foods such as cereal. It doesn't mean the food is unsafe after that date. THIS IS NOT CRITICAL.

**"Sell By," or "pull"** - An indication, to the retailer, of the last day on which a product should be sold. It takes into account time for the food to be stored and used at home. You should be able to use milk, for example, for up to about seven days after the sell-by date. Some supermarkets will let you have the item for free if it's past the sell date. It'll only be good for about a week.

**"Expiration"** – THIS IS IMPORTANT! For most foods, this is the last date on which they should be eaten or used. Eggs are an exception. You should be able to use them safely for the next three to five weeks.

**"Born on"** – Freshest within 110 days from the born-on date.

**Other foodwise info** - As a rule, high-acid canned foods like tomatoes can be stored on shelves for 12 to 18 months. Properly stored low-acid canned foods like meat, fish and most vegetables will keep two to five years, but don't use a can that is bulging! If perishable foods are packaged and frozen properly, they will be safe to eat after the expiration date, although the food may suffer freezer burn if it's stored for a long time.

**Activity:** Club President or Junior Leader makes an appointment with an area supermarket manager for the club to take a tour of the store specifically to discuss food expiration and freshness dates with each department. Once at the store, the club members examine foods in each department to see the different types of freshness labels.

**Follow-up:** Club members examine foods at home before the next meeting and bring in samples of each type of date label they find to discuss what they learned.