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MIDDLESEX COUNTY • N J

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY & HEALTH

Office of Health Services

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Joseph W. Krisza
Department Head

Lester Jones
Director

January 13, 2022

Jennifer Apostol, Director, REPLENISH
Department of Community Services
28 Kennedy Blvd., Suite 850
East Brunswick, NJ 08816

Dear Ms. Apostol,

Please be advised that food product dating is not required by Federal or New Jersey State regulations, except for milk/dairy products (including cottage cheese, yogurt, etc.), infant formula, and baby food. Canned and bottled foods with product dates refer to best quality and are not food safety dates. Canning/bottling is a high heat process that renders the food commercially sterile. Canned foods kept in a clean, dry environment for long periods of time will be microbiologically safe. Dried and boxed foods have a low water content (if any), and will also be microbiologically safe. Again, it is the quality of the food (taste, etc.) that may be impacted.

According to the New Jersey Department of Health, there are no restrictions on the sale of canned/bottled foods past the product date. The consumer has the final decision on whether or not to use outdated canned/bottled foods.

However, cans that are leaking, rusting, bulging, or severely dented (particularly at the seals of the can) must never be used for consumption, and must be discarded. Bottles with open/compromised seals should also be discarded.

Please note the different food product dating designations as well: "Best if used by" refers to when a product will be of best flavor or quality. "Sell by" refers to how long a retail food establishment should display the product for sale. "Freeze by" is when a product should be frozen to maintain peak quality. These dates are for quality control only, and are not related to food safety.

If you have any other questions regarding canned/bottled foods or dry food product, please contact an Inspection Division Supervisor at (732) 745-3100.

Sincerely,



David J. Kologinsky, Chief REHS, MCOHS

Cc: Lester Jones, Director-Health Officer

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