

Salvage Grocery Stores are an Alternative for Budget-Conscious Consumers

Most of the food products we buy these days are produced or packaged by a company that stamps on the food items a “sell by,” “use by,” or “best by” date. These dates are solely managed by the food industry with not federal or state laws setting the length of time between when a food can be produced and/or packaged and the date placed on the package. These dates are not necessarily linked to the time by which food must be eaten in order to be safe, according to a Harvard Study.

According to the National Resources Defense Council, as much as 40 percent of the food produced in the U.S. goes uneaten due to the confusion of package markings. That is \$165 billion worth of food each year. Thus, salvage grocery stores have sprung up, selling foods past their expiration dates throughout the United States.

Salvage grocery stores, also known as surplus grocery stores, are known for near-expired goods, slightly dented cans and “closeouts”, thus serving a grocery-shopping market hungry for low prices. Surplus grocery stores can save you as much as 30 to 50 percent on your food bill.

Salvage stores may have inventory of the following:

- Overstocked items
- Slightly damaged, bent, dented, ripped or torn packages or cans.
- Mislabeled or old labeled items
- Items not selling well in regular chain stores and returned to the warehouse.
- Near or at their sell-by or best-used-by dates.

Prices tend to be significantly lower than those at conventional stores and big discount stores.

Similar items sold at food auctions, products sold at surplus grocery stores are guaranteed by the USDA, stating that such items pose not safety hazard or poisoning threat. Excluded from this list is baby food and formula. The sell by dates refer to a product’s freshness, not its safety.

You can save hundreds of dollars and make the money you spend go further by knowing the real shelf-life of the foods you eat. Utilize the website <http://stilltasty.com>, search the section called “keep it or Toss it” to determine the real shelf-life of the food based on information from the USDA, the FDA and CDC.

A trip to a surplus grocery store is more like a treasure hunt. What is available one week may not be the next week.