

# Guidance Document for Determining Best By Date

## Olive Oil Commission of California

**What is a Use By Date?** The *CDFA Grade and Labeling Standards for Olive Oil, Refined-Olive Oil and Olive-Pomace Oil* Sec. 5.36 defines Use By Date (UBD) as follows:

A date on the container that signifies the end of the period during which the intact package of oil, if stored in accordance with stated storage conditions, will retain any specified qualities for which express or implied claims have been made.

Terminology used on packaging shall appear as “Best By” or “Best if Used By”. This means that a properly stored unopened product labeled with an Olive Oil Grade per section Sec 4.1 of the standard is expected to retain that grade until the Use By Date.

Beginning with the 2019-2020 harvest, declaration of a Use by Date is mandatory for handlers covered by the OOC (Sec.11.3.9). It must be supported by technical evidence. The Use By shall be displayed as “Best if Used By” or “Best By”. The label shall include storage conditions necessary to ensure the validity of that date. Usually this is simply a statement to store in a cool, dark place.

**What is meant by technical evidence?** In essence, technical evidence supporting a Use By Date is information showing that the olive oil in question is very likely to retain its grade according to the CDFA parameters until its stated Use By Date. This evidence will usually take the form of results of chemical analysis at the time of bottling. **If an olive oil is tested during its stated shelf life and found to be below the grade stated on the label, a handler may be asked to show documentation of testing and the Use By Date calculation for that lot.**

**Calculating Use By Dates** A [UCD Olive Center literature review](#) evaluated methods of calculating UBDs. The option most practical for OOC members was the [Modern Olives method](#). Unlike the other methods this method primarily uses the results of tests that are already required by the OOC—free fatty acid, DAGs (1,2 diacylglycerols) and PPP (pyropheophytin)—plus Induction Time testing (also called a Rancimat test). Taken together, these test results can be used to predict a Use By Date when analyzed with the [Modern Olives formula](#) as incorporated in this [Excel calculator](#). The method described above is suitable only for Extra Virgin Olive Oil. Other grades will require different methods. Handlers may choose other methods such as shelf life studies to support Use by Dates provided such methods are supported based on other technical evidence.

**Influence of Storage Conditions** Olive oil is very sensitive to post-production handling: a good oil stored badly will not maintain its quality over time. In order to safeguard the quality of an olive oil, exposure to light, air, heat, moisture and reactive metals must be avoided. It is recommended that handlers maintain records of storage conditions showing that the oil lots have been properly conserved prior to being released into the supply chain. If a Handler bottles from a single lot more than once, retesting the oil to determine a UBD is not necessary provided; (1) only the original UBD may appear on the label and (2) the oil has been properly stored during the period in which the bottlings take place.