



therefore may use food date labels to evaluate food safety, thus discarding a food that has passed its label date or rejecting a food in the absence of a date label in order to avoid foodborne illness (Davenport et al., 2019; Newsome et al., 2014; Qi & Roe, 2016; Toma, Costa & Thompspon, 2017). Other consumers may realize that they are not at risk for microbial infection, but still may reject a suboptimal food, citing health as their primary concern (Wansink & Wright, 2006). This underscores the need for consistency of food date labels (from state to state) as well as consumer education regarding food date labels and food waste. Following a published report documenting the degree of household food waste in the United Kingdom, WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) launched the “Love Food Hate Waste Initiative,” and subsequently reported a 21% decrease in consumer food waste between 2007 and 2012 (Quested, Ingle, & Parry, 2013).

In the United States, consistent use and application of date labels may represent an important opportunity to reduce household food waste, provided consumers understand their intention. Many consumers report using food date labels when making purchasing and consumption decisions despite evidence that these labels &  
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food date labels meant, significantly more women than men knew what the “best by, use by” date meant ( $p = 0.022$ ). This was the only significant difference between genders, though correct identification of the “sell by” date approached significance ( $p = 0.054$ ); again, a higher percentage of women supplied the appropriate response. The oldest and youngest respondents (i.e. 18-29 and over 60 years) were more likely to know what “sell by” meant when compared with the respondents 30–60 years old ( $p = 0.005$ ). Older participants (45 years and above) were less likely to correctly identify the meaning of “expiration date” ( $p < 0.001$ ).

### 3.3. Food use behavior

The majority of participants reported that they would consume a

infant formula ([USDA, 2019](#)). As part of the same investigation previously mentioned, Kosa and colleagues found that many consumers identified the “use by” date as a measure of food safety, which incidentally, is the correct definition for those residing in the European Union ([Kosa et al., 2007](#); [Toma et al., 2017](#)). The inconsistent application of the

Surveys are easy to administer but are limited when it comes to assessing food waste behaviors because respondents may be likely to underreport their true propensity to waste food. For example, as part of a survey administered by Jorissen and associates, over a quarter of respondents claimed not to waste any food at all ([Jorissen et al., 2015](#)), which seems unlikely. Neff et al. also reported a similar tendency of participants to underreport food waste in their household ([Neff et al., 2015](#)). To that end, there may be a need for observational or “real time”