

INT. KITCHEN

A father, ERIC, and his twelve-year-old daughter, ANNIE, are sitting in their kitchen. The daughter just finished pouring milk into her cereal and takes a bite. Her father looks at the milk carton and sees that the sell-by date says "YESTERDAY."

ERIC
Oh, you can't eat your cereal. It says here this milk expired yesterday.

ANNIE
(shrugging)
Tastes fine to me.

ERIC grabs the cereal from ANNIE.

ANNIE
HEY! I was eating that!

ERIC starts to pour the cereal down the drain while ADAM bursts into the kitchen via the refrigerator. The door swings open and he seems out of breathe.

ADAM
I can't let this go any further. Stop wasting that perfectly good breakfast food!

ERIC looks stunned at ADAM's arrival and is still pouring the cereal out in a shocked-like state. The camera pans out to show ANNIE has placed her head directly under where her dad is pouring so that the cereal goes into her mouth instead of the garbage disposal in the sink. ERIC realizes what she's doing and stops pouring out the cereal.

ERIC
It's not perfectly good. It says RIGHT here on the carton that it expired yesterday. I trust this expiration date more than some guy who's been living in my refrigerator. Who are you, anyway?

ADAM
I'm Adam Conover and this is Adam Ruins Everything.

Title credits play.

(CONTINUED)

ANNIE

Dad, he's right. The milk tastes fine. Give me my cereal back.

ERIC

Not a chance. The government put that label on there for a reason. I don't want you getting sick.

ADAM

Actually, the government has nothing to do with that dates found on most food. Most dates don't have anything to do with getting sick, either. They're about taste. They're usually arrived at one of two ways. Here, I'll show you.

ADAM leads ERIC and ANNIE into the refrigerator.

INT. BOARD ROOM

When they come out of another refrigerator in a board room that has 5 people sitting with cheeseburgers in front of them.

ADAM

With the exception of infant formula, the FDA doesn't regulate expiration dates, so companies will sometimes just bring in regular people and have them taste test the product. They'll give them one from a day ago, one from the day before that, and so on. Once somebody decides one day tasted better than another, that becomes the date you see on many of your foods.

A woman, TASTE TESTER, takes a bite of a cheeseburger.

TASTE TESTER

Gross! This one has ketchup on it. I hate ketchup. It must be expired.

ADAM looks at ERIC expectantly.

ERIC

Okay, so it's not perfect, but I still trust the taste test.

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ADAM

I agree that it isn't the worst idea, but a lot of companies can't even afford to bring in testers since it costs money to pay them.

The row of five taste testers turn into bags of money one by one.

ANNIE

Sweet! Free money!

ADAM

You can't bring it back through the fridge with you. Trust me, I've tried.

ERIC

What do companies do if they can't afford the taste test?

ADAM

Guess!

ERIC

I don't want to guess. I want you to tell me.

ADAM

No, I mean the companies guess. They literally just take a stab in the dark and slap an arbitrary number on the food you buy at the grocery store.

CUT TO: a boss sitting at his desk playing solitaire and bouncing a ball against a wall. An employee enters his office.

EMPLOYEE

Hey boss, when do our cookies expire?

BOSS

That's a great question! When's your birthday?

EMPLOYEE

October 18th.

BOSS

Well that's when they expire then!

CUT TO: ADAM, ERIC, and ANNIE are back in the board room.

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ANNIE

You know, I'm still hungry.

ADAM

Here, let's go back to our house--I mean your house--and have some breakfast.

INT. KITCHEN

ADAM, ERIC, and ANNIE exit through the board room fridge and re-enter the kitchen of their home. ANNIE starts eating cereal right out of the box.

ERIC

So why can't we just re-do the system and have everybody do an accurate, controlled taste test?

ADAM

Because it's impossible to accurately predict when food will go bad. There's too many variables. Say you two go to the grocery store and then rush right home afterward so you can watch your favorite show, Adam Ruins Everything.

An animation shows ERIC and ANNIE getting back into the car with groceries and going immediately home to their TV.

ANNIE

What show?

ERIC

Never heard of it.

An animation of ERIC and ANNIE in the car appears again.

ADAM

Well THOSE groceries will last a lot longer than the ones you left in the car while running errands.

An animation plays of animated ERIC and ANNIE getting gas, going to the pet store, helping an old lady cross the street, playing mini golf, and then returning to their car to find the groceries are emitting a green cloud and have clearly gone bad.

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ANIMATED ERIC

One last errand: we've gotta go
back to the store for new
groceries.

ADAM

Even your fridge temperature can
play a role--although I admit, I
found it quite comfy in there.

The mascot bird on the cereal ANNIE is eating comes to life.

BIRD

My date says I expire a month from
now, but you left my box open last
week and now all my flippy flakes
are hard as rocks.

ANNIE is still eating cereal and her teeth look all chipped.

ANNIE

(through chipped teeth)
I thought something was off.

ERIC

Even if it's just guessing, it's
not like having the dates on food
is doing any real harm.

ADAM

That's not entirely true!

ADAM opens the fridge and EMILY BROAD LEIB comes out.

ADAM

This is my friend, Emily Broad
Leib, she's a professor at Harvard
and an expert on food.

EMILY

Hi Eric and Annie, how are you?

ERIC

Fine, but we need a new fridge.

EMILY

Because expiration dates are so
inconsistent, they lead to a ton of
food waste in this country. Every
year, an estimated 40% of food goes
uneaten and the average family
loses \$1560. We need to re-do our
entire system, Eric. Labels that

(MORE)

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EMILY (cont'd)
indicate safety, such as on deli meats, need to be completely separate from ones that are just guesses about taste and freshness. Sell by, best by, enjoy by-- it's too confusing right now. By all means, throw out food once it tastes off, but don't let a random date decide for you.

ADAM
Tell them about the donating laws!

EMILY
I'm getting there, Adam. In some states, such as Montana, food is banned from being donated after a "sell by" date. Perfectly good food is literally disappearing from the hands of people who need it.

An animation is shown of a stick figure eating cereal, then having the cereal poof into thin air.

STICK FIGURE
Aw, come on!

ANNIE
See, dad?

ERIC
I guess expiration dates aren't as big of a deal as I thought.

ADAM and EMILY high-five and EMILY exits through the fridge.

ADAM
Well, that's it for me too, then.
Looks like my work here is done.

ADAM starts to exit through the fridge.

ERIC
Maybe we should start buying food in bulk to save some money.

ADAM stops mid step, looks pained, and raises his finger.

ADAM
On second thought, maybe I should stick around and explain why buying food in bulk usually isn't the money saver people think it is.