



August 2022



Bite-Sized
Food Safety

Food safety resources
for front-line managers
to train food workers

Date Marking

ASK: Why do we date mark foods?

ANSWER: Some bacteria that can cause foodborne illness can grow at temperatures below 41°F if given enough time. Specifically, *Clostridium botulinum* (botulism) and *Listeria monocytogenes*.

ASK: What foods need to be date marked?

ANSWER: Time/temperature controlled for safety (TCS) foods held under refrigeration for more than 24 hours from the time they were prepared (if prepared on-premises) or from the time the original container is opened (if prepared and packaged at a food processing plant).

ASK: How long can date-marked foods be held under refrigeration.

ANSWER: Date-marked foods can be held for a maximum of seven (7) days. They must be served or sold by Day 7 or they must be discarded.

ASK: How are the days counted?

ANSWER: The day the food is prepared on-premises or the original container is opened is counted as Day 1.

ASK: What if the food is frozen?

ANSWER: The "Seven Day Clock" stops when a food is frozen and restarts when it is thawed. For example, if a food is frozen on Day 3, the day it is subsequently thawed counts as Day 4.

ASK: Do any TCS foods have shorter times than seven (7) days that they can be held under refrigeration?

ANSWER: Yes, if the manufacturer's use-by date which has been determined based on food safety is a shorter period of time, that day or date may not be exceeded.

ASK: What if date-marked foods are used as ingredients in a prepared food?

ANSWER: The prepared food is then date-marked with the date marking of the earliest prepared ingredient or the earliest date an original container of a TCS food ingredient was opened. For example, a can of tuna is opened and date marked. On Day 3 the tuna is used to make tuna salad. The tuna salad would be date-marked to be served or discarded within four (4) four days after preparation.

ASK: Are there any foods that are not required to be date-marked?

ANSWER: Yes. Cultured dairy products such as yogurt, sour cream, and buttermilk. Dry fermented sausages such as pepperoni or Genoa salami. Salt-cured products such as prosciutto or Parma ham. Deli salads such as potato salad, chicken salad, or pasta salad if produced in a food processing plant. Preserved fish products. In-shell molluscan shellfish (oysters, clams, mussels, etc). Some cheeses. Check with the Health Department if you have a question about date marking a TCS food product.

CLOSING THOUGHT: *Date marking assures that our customers get food that is fresh and safe to eat. It helps us be sure that the foods prepared first are served first.*