Food Safety Fact Sheet

Date Marking

Bacteria can grow to dangerous levels when foods that require time and temperature control for safety (TCS) are held too long, even under refrigeration. The main concern is Listeria monocytogenes, which can cause serious illness in pregnant women, the elderly, and people with immune system problems. To limit how long food is kept, refrigerated ready-to-eat TCS foods must be date marked to ensure that the food is either consumed or discarded within seven days.

Food must be date marked if it is:

- Prepared on-site or commercially processed package is opened, and
- Held under refrigeration, and
- Time/temperature controlled for safety (TCS), and
- Ready-to-eat, and
- Held for more than 24 hours

Mark the food with the date it was prepared or when it must be consumed or discarded:

- Food can be held for seven days if held at 41ºF or below.
- Day of preparation or day commercially processed food was opened counts as day one.
- Add six days to the prep date or open date OR count seven days including the preparation or opening date.
- Example chart below:

Prepare/Open Day:	**Use or Discard by**:
Sunday 6/2	Saturday 6/8
Monday 6/3	Sunday 6/9
Tuesday 6/4	Monday 6/10
Wednesday 6/5	Tuesday 6/11
Thursday 6/6	Wednesday 6/12
Friday 6/7	Thursday 6/13
Saturday 6/8	Friday 6/14

When food requiring date marking is frozen and it is removed from the freezer:

- Mark it with a "consume by" date that is up to seven days minus the length of time the food was refrigerated before it was frozen.

OR

- Mark with a "consume by" date that is within 24 hours of removal from freezer.