

Fact Sheet: Date Marking

The purpose of this fact sheet is to provide a summary of the Date Marking criteria that will take effect beginning July 1, 2015. Please refer to the [2009 FDA Food Code Chapter 3-501.17](#) for complete Date Marking information.

Why is Date Marking Important?

Date marking is a means of controlling the growth of *Listeria monocytogenes*.

- *Listeria monocytogenes* is a bacterium that continues to grow at refrigerator temperatures.
- Date marking is a procedure to ensure food is discarded before these bacteria can cause foodborne illness.

What FOODS must be Date Marked?

Other than the foods exempt from Date Marking (on the left), all Ready-to-Eat, Time/Temperature Control Foods (TCS foods) that are held under refrigeration for more than 24 hours must be date marked.

Exemptions from Date Marking Requirements:

1. Individual meal portions served or repackaged from a bulk container upon a consumer's request.
2. Shellstock
3. Any of the following foods if prepared and packaged by an inspected food processing plant:
 - Deli salads
 - Aged hard cheese
 - Semi-soft cheeses
 - Cultured dairy products
 - Preserved Fish products
 - Shelf stable dry

❖ Ready to Eat, Time Temperature for Safety (TCS) foods, including both:

- Commercially prepared and/or
- Prepared onsite and held under refrigeration for more than 24 hours.

How to Date Mark your establishment's food items?

Any system of date marking is acceptable, provided it is:

- Understandable
- Effective
- Consistent

Fact Sheet: Date Marking

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What if I **FREEZE** the food?

- Freezing food stops the date marking clock but does not reset it.
- If a food is stored at 41° F for two days and then frozen at 0° F, it can be safely stored at 41° F for five more days after removal from the freezer.
- The **freezing date and the thawing date** must be provided on the container along with the preparation date to indicate how many of the original seven days have expired.

If food is not properly dated, it must be used or discarded within 24 hours.

What if I **COMBINE** foods that were opened on **DIFFERENT DATES**?

It is best to **AVOID** mixing different batches of foods.

If different containers of foods are combined, *the date of the **oldest** ingredient becomes the reference date.*

For example:

If today is Wednesday, and you are mixing salad prepared on Monday with salad prepared on Tuesday, the salad would be labeled as prepared Monday.

Fact Sheet: Date Marking

Date Marking of Potentially Hazardous, Ready-to-Eat Foods

