

DATE MARKING FACT SHEET

Why date mark?

- To prevent the growth of bacteria that could make people sick

What foods need to be date marked?

- Any refrigerated, ready to eat, potentially hazardous foods that are prepared at the food establishment and will be held for more than 24 hours.
- Any refrigerated and ready to eat foods that were prepared and packaged in a food processing plant once opened if it will be held for more than 24 hours.

If you answer yes to all 5 of these questions then the food needs to be date marked:

- Does the food require refrigeration?
- If commercially packaged, has the original package been opened?
- Is the food ready to eat/could it be eaten just like it is, regardless of temperature? Examples: pre-cooked meats, pasta, soups, sauces, etc.
- Is the food potentially hazardous/will it grow bacteria? Examples: animal products, dairy products, cooked vegetables, and cooked starches, etc..
- Will the food be in the establishment for more than 24 hours?

Date Marking Example for Frozen Food

Date	Shelf Life Day	Action
Oct. 1	1	Cook/cool
Oct. 2	2	Cold hold at 41°F
Oct. 3		Freeze
Oct. 10	3	Thaw to 41°F
Oct. 11	4	Cold hold
Oct. 12	5	Cold hold
Oct. 13	6	Cold hold
Oct. 14	7	Consume or discard

Are there any exceptions to date marking?

- Commercially prepared deli salad such as pasta salad, potato salad, etc.
- Hard cheeses such as cheddar, gruyere, parmesan, romano, etc.
- Semi-soft cheeses such as blue cheese, gorgonzola, gouda, Monterey jack, etc.
- Cultured dairy products such as yogurt, sour cream, and buttermilk
- Preserved fish products such as pickled herring, dried or salted cod, etc. and smoked fish products
- Shelf stable, dry fermented sausages, such as pepperoni and genoa salami that are not labeled “keep refrigerated” and retain the original casing on the product
- Shelf stable salt-cured products such as prosciutto and Parma ham that are not labeled “keep refrigerated”
- Cheese curds

How should I date mark?

- Once the product has been opened or made, it must be dated and discarded after 7 days.
- The date mark can show the date the food was prepped or the date the food must be discarded
- Remember to count the day the food was made or opened as day 1 then add 6 more days.
- If prepped or opened food is frozen remember to subtract the days that it was in the refrigerator from the date mark . See Example for date marking frozen food.

