



Licking County Health Department

675 Price Road

Newark, OH 43055

Food Safety Program Date Marking Fact Sheet

Public Health Significance

Bacteria can grow to dangerous levels when some foods are stored under refrigeration for extended periods. This can lead to an increased risk of foodborne illness. As a result, refrigerated potentially hazardous and ready-to-eat foods must be date marked to assure the food is either consumed or discarded within 7 days.

Definitions

Potentially hazardous: time/temperature controlled for safety foods.

Ready-to-eat: food that does not require any additional preparation, such as washing or cooking.

Date marking is only required when food is:

- Potentially hazardous;
- Ready-to-eat;
- Refrigerated (41°F or below); and stored more than 24 hours.

How do I date mark required food items?

The date marking requirements listed above apply to processed food from a manufacturer, such as deli meats, once they have been opened, as well as to food prepared in a licensed facility. The date marking requirements specify that containers be date marked with a “consume by” date (date of opening/preparation + 6 days) and if food is not consumed by that date – it must be discarded.

Ex: A food opened/prepared on April 2nd would need to be marked with a “consume by” date of April 8th (date of opening/preparation + 6 days).

This can be done by simply writing the “consume by” date on the food container or covering with a marker.

When combining foods in a dish with different “consume by” dates, the “consume by” date of the new dish should be the date of the earliest opened/prepared food.

What if I freeze the food?

Freezing food stops the date marking clock but does not reset it. If a food is refrigerated for 2 days and then frozen, it can still be refrigerated for 5 more days when it begins to thaw.

Date Marking Exemptions

1. Salad dressings and condiments packaged by the manufacturer: such as ketchup, mustard, relish, mayonnaise and salad dressings. Salad dressings/sauces prepared in the food facility must be date marked.
2. Deli salads packaged by the manufacturer: such as ham salad, seafood salad, chicken salad, egg salad, pasta salad, and macaroni salad. Deli salads prepared in the food facility must be date marked.
3. Cultured dairy products: such as milk, creams, sour cream, and yogurt.
4. Hard cheeses: such as cheddar, gruyere, parmesan, reggiano and romano.
5. Semi-soft cheeses: such as blue, edam, gorgonzola, gouda and monteray jack.
6. Uncut portions of shelf stable processed cured meats that are not labeled “Keep Refrigerated.”

Contact Us

We will be happy to answer any questions you have about date marking in your facility! Please call our Food Safety Program at 740-349-6535 or email us at environmental@lickingcohealth.org