

## Date Marking Foods

Date marking is important to control the growth of Listeria, an organism that grows at refrigeration temperatures. Date marking is a method to identify how long foods are stored and when the item should be discarded.

### Which Food Must be Date Marked?

- Prepared, time-temperature controlled for safety (TCS) foods that are ready-to-eat and held in the refrigerator for longer than 24 hours.
- Commercially prepared time-temperature controlled for safety (TCS) foods that are opened and held in the refrigerator for longer than 24 hours.

### How to Mark the Date

- Foods must be discarded or consumed within 7 days.
- The date of preparation or opening is the first day. Add 6 days to the first day to know the last day the item can be served.
- Any effective method can be used for date marking, but it must be consistent and understood by staff.

### 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 2 days and then frozen, it can still be stored at 41°F for 5 more days after removing it from the freezer.
- The preparation, freeze and thaw dates must be on the container to truly know how long the food was stored in the refrigerator.

### What if I Combine Food that was Opened on Different Dates?

- When foods that are prepared at different dates are combined, the ingredient that was prepared first becomes the date of preparation.

### Foods that Do Not Require Date Marking

- Commercially processed deli salads (chicken salad, seafood salad, pasta salad)
- Hard cheeses (cheddar, colby, parmesan, swiss, blue, gorgonzola)
- Cultured dairy products (yogurt, sour cream, buttermilk)
- Preserved fish products (pickled herring and dried or salted cod)
- Shelf-stable salt-cured products (prosciutto and Parma ham) that are not labeled "keep refrigerated."
- Smoked fish at retail