

Date Marking Ready-to-Eat, Potentially Hazardous Food

PURPOSE: To ensure appropriate rotation of ready-to-eat food to prevent or reduce foodborne illness from *Listeria monocytogenes*.

SCOPE: This procedure applies to foodservice employees who prepare, store, or serve food.

KEY WORDS: Ready-to-Eat Food, Potentially Hazardous Food, Date Marking, Cross-Contamination

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Train foodservice employees on using the procedures in this SOP. The best practice for a date marking system would be to include a label with the product name, the day or date, and time it is prepared or opened. Examples of how to indicate when the food is prepared or opened include:
 - a. Labeling food with a calendar date, such as “cut cantaloupe, 5/26/05, 8:00 a.m.,”
 - b. Identifying the day of the week, such as “cut cantaloupe, Monday, 8:00 a.m.,” or
 - c. Using color-coded marks or tags, such as cut cantaloupe, blue dot, 8:00 a.m. means “cut on Monday at 8:00 a.m.”
2. Food prepared and held for more than 24 hours shall be clearly marked to indicate the date or day by which the food shall be consumed, sold, or discarded when held at a temperature of 5°C (41°F) or less for a maximum of 7 days. The day of preparation shall be counted as Day 1.
3. Label ready-to-eat, potentially hazardous foods that are prepared on-site and held for more than 24 hours.
4. Label any processed, ready-to-eat, potentially hazardous foods when opened, if they are to be held for more than 24 hours.
5. Refrigerate all ready-to-eat, potentially hazardous foods at 41°F or below.
6. Serve or discard refrigerated, ready-to-eat, potentially hazardous foods within 7 days.
7. Indicate with a separate label the date prepared, the date frozen, and the date thawed of any refrigerated, ready-to-eat, potentially hazardous foods.
8. Calculate the 7-day time period by counting only the days that the food is under refrigeration. For example:
 - a. On Monday, 8/1/05, lasagna is cooked, properly cooled, and refrigerated with a label that reads, “Lasagna, Cooked, 8/1/05.”
 - b. On Tuesday, 8/2/05, the lasagna is frozen with a second label that reads, “Frozen, 8/2/05.” Two labels now appear on the lasagna. Since the lasagna was

held under refrigeration from Monday, 8/1/05 – Tuesday, 8/2/05, only 1 day is counted towards the 7-day time period.

- c. On Tuesday 8/16/05 the lasagna is pulled out of the freezer. A third label is placed on the lasagna that reads, “Thawed, 8/16/05.” All three labels now appear on the lasagna. The lasagna must be served or discarded within 6 days.

MONITORING

A designated employee will check refrigerators daily to verify that foods are date marked and that foods exceeding the 7-day time period are not being used or stored.

CORRECTIVE ACTION

1. Retrain any foodservice employee found not following the procedures in this SOP.
2. Foods that are not date marked or that exceed the 7-day time period will be discarded.

VERIFICATION AND RECORD KEEPING

The foodservice manager will complete the Food Safety Checklist daily. The Food Safety Checklist is to be kept on file for a minimum of 1 year.

DATE IMPLEMENTED: _____ **BY:** _____

DATE REVIEWED: _____ **BY:** _____

DATE REVISED: _____ **BY:** _____