

# DATE MARKING

## Code Section: 3-501.17 Date Marking

### What Is Date Marking?

Date marking is an identification system for certain ready-to-eat foods that helps determine when a food was prepared and when it must be thrown away. Date marking is a means of controlling the growth of *Listeria*, a bacteria which causes foodborne illness, and which continues to grow under refrigeration.

### How To Date Mark:

**All foods that require date marking must be consumed, sold, or discarded within 7 days.**

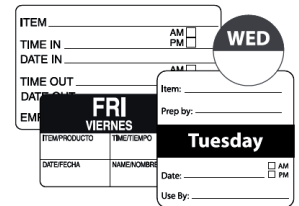
- Day 1 for foods prepared in the facility is the date of preparation.
- Day 1 for commercially prepared foods is the date the food is opened.

Each facility may choose any method of date marking such as calendar days, days of the week, color-coded marks, or other effective marking methods. It is important that the system be understandable, effective, and consistently used correctly by employees.

***Date marking is required for all foods that meet the following criteria:***



- **Are time/temperature controlled for safety**
  - **Are ready-to-eat**
  - **Are refrigerated**
- **Are held for more than 24 hours**



### What if I freeze the food?

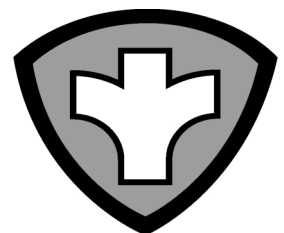
Freezing food stops the date marking clock, but does not reset it. The food must be marked with the number of days held in refrigeration prior to freezing and dated when the food is removed from the freezer to limit consumption to 7 refrigerated calendar days.

### What if I combine food that was prepared or opened on different dates?

When foods prepared or opened on different days are combined together, the date of the oldest food becomes the reference date. So if you are making chili and today is Wednesday and you are combining beans cooked today with ground beef cooked Monday, the chili's day 1 would be Monday.

### My facility uses all the food prepared or opened within 4 days, do I still need to date mark?

Yes. Any foods not going to be served, sold, or discarded within 24 hours must be date marked.



**Public Health**  
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