



Date Marking

Refrigerated, ready-to-eat (RTE), time/temperature controlled for safety (TCS) food prepared in a food service operation or in a retail food establishment and held at a temperature of 41°F or less for more than 24 hours shall be clearly marked to indicate the date or day that is a maximum of seven days, by which the food shall be consumed on the premises, sold, or discarded. The day of preparation counts as day one.

The following foods are examples of RTE, TCS foods:

Sliced tomatoes • Salad • Soup • Cooked pasta • Milk • Lunchmeat

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date
<i>Day 1:</i>	<i>Day 2</i>	<i>Day 3</i>	<i>Day 4</i>	<i>Day 5</i>	<i>Day 6</i>	<i>Day 7:</i>
<u>Food is prepared</u> TCS	TCS	TCS	TCS	TCS	TCS	<u>TCS</u> <i>Discard food at end of this night or the morning of Day 8, prior to preparing or serving food</i>

- Ensure the date is written on day dots/date marks to prevent any confusion.
- Ensure old date marking labels are removed when washing containers.
- Even if a particular product has a high turnover rate and is being used within three days, it still needs to be date marked.
- When a container needs to be refilled, ensure all the food is used up and then wash, rinse, and sanitize the container before adding new food product.
- WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!

Combining Ingredients

When combining ingredients made on different days use the earliest discard date.

For example: If combining chicken salad mix prepared on January 7 with chicken that was prepared on January 3, then the chicken salad should be discarded on January 10, which is seven days from the earliest prepared ingredients (the chicken).

Freezing Food

Freezing food can “stop the clock” on date marking. It is important to indicate the remaining number of days the food can be used once it is thawed.

Jan 1	Jan 2	Jan 3	Jan 4	Jan 5	Jan 6	Jan 7
	Day Food is Prepared (Day 1)	Food placed in the freezer (Day 2)				
Jan 8	Jan 9	Jan 10	Jan 11	Jan 12	Jan 13	Jan 14
			Food Thawed (Day 3)	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6
Jan 15	Jan 16	Jan 17	Jan 18	Jan 19	Jan 20	Jan 21
Food shall be discarded at the end of the day (Day 7)						

Here is an example of one way to date mark food efficiently:

Prepared Date ____/____/____
Frozen on ____/____/____
Thawed on ____/____/____
Discard on ____/____/____