

Date Marking

Why

Date marking is a means controlling for bacterial contamination and assuring that food is discarded before bacteria can cause foodborne illness.

What

According to the United States Food and Drug Administration, foods that should be date marked include those that are:

- Temperature Controlled for Safety (TCS)
- Ready-to-eat (RTE)
- Refrigerated
- Held more than 24 hours

Some foods that **DO NOT** need to be date marked include:

- Air cooled hard boiled eggs with the shell intact
- Shell eggs that are not hard-boiled, but has been pasteurized to destroy all viable salmonellae
- Food in a hermetically sealed container commercially processed to achieve and maintain commercial sterility under non-refrigerated storage and distribution
- A food that is designated as a non-TCS food because of its pH or water activity value

When

Ready-to-eat and potentially hazardous foods held for more than 24 hours should be date marked at the time of preparation to indicate the date by when the food should be consumed. This food shall be discarded if not sold or served within seven days.

You can choose any marking method that suits the needs of your establishment, as long as it is understandable, effective, consistently used by employees. It's recommended you provide a written policy for employees to follow.

Use the chart on the following page for more detailed date marking instruction.

Additional Resources

For a list of foods that are considered TCS and/or ready-to-eat:

https://www.michigan.gov/documents/MDA_FOOD_DateMarkGuide_4_88280_7.5.pdf

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/food/fs/datemark.html>

For more background information on the process of date marking:

https://www.michigan.gov/documents/MDA_FOOD_DateMarkGuide_4_88280_7.5.pdf



Below is an easy-to-follow chart that describes what foods to date mark and when to do so according to the Iowa Department of Inspection and Appeals.

