



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*.

INSTRUCTIONS:

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. Label food with a calendar date, for example: "cut cantaloupe, 5/26/05, 8:00 a.m.,"

1. Follow State or local health department requirements.
2. Label with the date, ready-to-eat, potentially hazardous foods that are prepared on-site.
3. Label with the date, any processed, ready-to-eat, potentially hazardous foods when it is opened.
4. Refrigerate all ready-to-eat, potentially hazardous foods at 41 °F or below.
5. Serve or discard refrigerated, ready-to-eat, potentially hazardous foods **within 7 days**.
6. **Indicate with a separate label the date prepared, the date frozen, and the date thawed of any refrigerated, ready-to-eat, potentially hazardous foods that will be frozen and latter thawed.**
7. Calculate the 7-day time period by counting only the days that the food is under refrigeration. For example:
 - On Monday, 8/1/05, lasagna is cooked, properly cooled, and refrigerated with a label that reads, "Lasagna, Cooked, 8/1/05."
 - 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.
 - 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.