



**Do not place anything in this cooler without a date mark!**



CUYAHOGA COUNTY  
BOARD OF HEALTH  
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# DATE MARKING FACTS

**DATE MARKED FOOD CAN BE KEPT AT OR BELOW 41°F FOR UP TO 7 DAYS.**

## **WHY IS DATE MARKING IMPORTANT?**

It is a means of controlling the growth of *Listeria monocytogenes*, a bacteria that can grow at cold temperatures. Listeria is most harmful to children and the elderly and may cause miscarriage in pregnant women.

Date marking ensures that food is discarded before these bacteria can cause foodborne illness.

## **WHICH FOOD ITEMS MUST CONTAIN A DATE MARK?**

- ♦ Open TCS food (dairy, cooked vegetables, cooked meat, cooked pasta and rice, cut melons, etc.)
- ♦ Refrigerated food removed from original containers
- ♦ Food items prepared in the facility and kept for more than 24 hours

## **HOW SHOULD THE DATE BE MARKED?**

A: Items should be date marked using actual dates on the container, color codes, or day dots — as long as the date marking system is consistent and clear for all employees.

## **WHAT DATE SHOULD BE PLACED ON THE FOOD?**

The expiration date placed on the product is **6 days from the day the food was prepared or opened**. For example, coleslaw prepared on April 15 has an expiration of April 21.

## **WHAT IF I COMBINE FOODS WITH DIFFERENT DATE MARKS?**

The date of the **oldest** ingredient should be used as a reference date.

## **WHAT IF A FOOD ITEM THAT HAS NOT REACHED ITS EXPIRATION DATE APPEARS TO BE SPOILED?**

This product should never be served/ sold—discard or return for credit.

## **WHAT IF DATE MARKED ITEMS ARE FROZEN?**

Freezing foods **stops** the date mark clock but does not reset it.