

Date Marking

What foods have to be date marked?

Ready-to-eat (**RTE**) potentially hazardous foods that are held in a refrigerator for more than **24 hours**.

What does “RTE” mean?

RTE means “ready-to-eat”. These are foods that are safe to eat without additional cooking. Examples are: cold cuts, sliced tomatoes, soft cheese, potato salad, cooked meat and poultry.

What does the date marking need to show?

The date of preparation OR the date the food must be thrown away if **not consumed**. The discard date must be no more than **7 days** from the preparation date.

Date Marking is for:

⇒ **RTE Foods**

that need to be refrigerated AND will be held for more than 24 hours



Labels must show:

⇒ **Preparation Date OR Use by Date**

*If frozen, the label needs to show the date when the food was removed from the freezer

All RTE foods must be **USED** or **THROWN AWAY** within **7 days** from the date it was prepared.

What if you freeze the food after preparation?

⇒ Freezing food stops the “date marking clock” but does not re-set it.

Example: If a food is prepared on January 1st and refrigerated at 41F until January 3rd, then placed in the freezer for 3 days, it can be held at 41F for 4 more days after removed from the freezer. The date of removal must be shown on the label.

⇒ If food is NOT labeled with preparation date or thawing date it must be used or discarded within 24 hours.