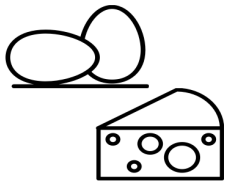
4 Easy Steps to Date Marking

Harmful bacteria can grow in foods at cold temperatures. If certain foods are kept too long the bacteria can grow to unsafe levels and cause illness. The bacteria of greatest concern is Listeria monocytogenes or LM. Date marking foods, in addition to storing refrigerated foods at 41°F or less, is the best protection against this harmful bacteria.

Date marking requirements apply to child care facilities or school kitchens that serve food to children under the age of 5 because they are more vulnerable to illness. Date marking requirements also apply to facilities that specialize in serving children with weakened immune systems, regardless of age.

Below you will find 4 easy to follow steps for date marking.

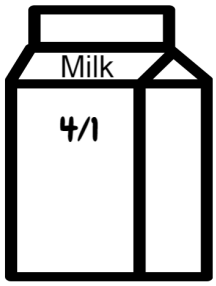
1



FOOD

Opening commercially packaged food or preparing food is the first step. Using the list on the reverse side, determine whether or not foods need to be date marked.

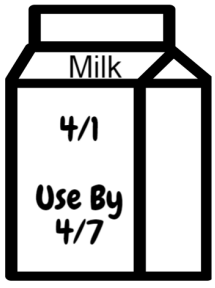
2



MARK DAY 1

Mark food that will be kept more than 24 hours with the date it was prepared or opened. This may be recorded by writing on the container, plastic wrap, or by using a sticker.

3



MARK DAY 7

Mark food with the date it needs to be used by or discarded. Foods must be consumed or discarded within 7 days. The day the food was prepared or opened is day 1. If the manufacturer date comes before day 7 then mark this date as the use by date. If preparing a food, review manufacturer dates for all ingredients. This may be recorded by writing on the container, plastic wrap, or by using a sticker.

4

DISCARD

Discard any food that has not been consumed by the date determined in step 3.

For additional information:
(303)692-3645
www.colorado.gov/cdphe/child-care

CDPHE
COLORADO
Department of Public Health & Environment

Date mark these foods after opening or preparing if they are kept for more than 24 hours.

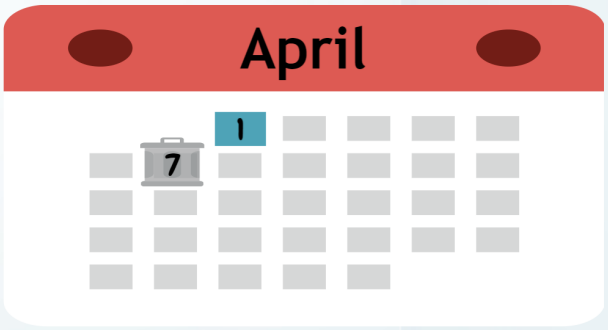
- Milk (animal milks, nut milks, and soy milk)
- Cold deli salads made at facility (egg, tuna, ham, chicken, potato, pasta)
- Hard boiled eggs
- Deli meats including hot dogs
- Soft cheeses (feta, brie, mozzarella)
- Cottage cheese
- Cream cheese
- Ricotta cheese
- Cut melons (watermelon, cantaloupe, honey dew)
- Cut leafy greens (lettuce, spinach, cabbage)
- Cut tomatoes
- Refrigerated foods that will not be heated and kept longer than 24 hours after opening

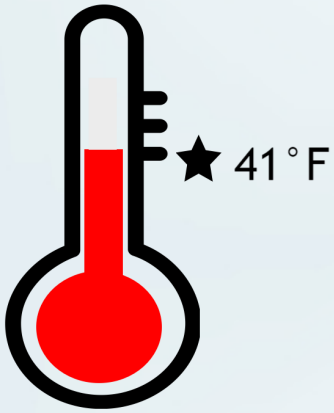
It is not necessary to date mark these foods.

- Cereal, crackers, and other foods that do not need to be refrigerated
- Yogurt
- Buttermilk
- Sour cream
- Hard and semi soft cheeses (cheddar, colby, monterey, gouda, havarti, swiss, provolone, parmesan, processed pasteurized cheese)
- Commercially processed and packaged deli salads (egg, tuna, ham, chicken, potato, and pasta)
- Foods that will be cooked before eating (eggs, raw meats)
- Condiments that do not require refrigeration (ketchup and mustard)
- Foods that will be consumed within 24 hours of preparation or opening

Day 1 = Day item was prepared or opened

Day 7 = Day item needs to be used or discarded





Always keep refrigerated foods at 41°F or less!

For additional training on food safety, visit:
www.statefoodsafety.com