

This document explains the simple yet important rules regarding date coding. Print and share this with your employees.

FreshMarx® is your home to the food safety labeling solutions offered by Avery Dennison, a global leader in labeling technologies. Our mission is food safety protection using innovative and customized date coding solutions for your kitchen's operation. Reducing pathogens that cause foodborne-illness is serious business. You can count on FreshMarx to have a manual or fully automated solution to best meet your specific needs.

The goal of all date coding is to reduce foodborne-illness by controlling the growth of certain bacteria. Listerial monocytogenes is a bacteria that continues to grow at refrigerated temperatures. The purpose of date coding is to ensure that food is discarded before this bacteria can result in a foodborne-illness.

Food that needs to be date coded:

1. Potentially Hazardous Foods (PHF) / Time-Temperature Controlled for Safety (TCS) foods requiring time and temperature control to limit pathogen growth or toxin formation.
2. Ready-to-Eat (RTE) food
3. Food held in refrigeration for more than 24 hours.

Some examples of potentially hazardous food include: meats, dairy products, raw eggs, seafood, cooked vegetables, rice and pasta.

- Deli meats, soft cheeses, pre-made sandwiches
- Potato or macaroni salad, tuna or chicken salad that is pre-made or made on site
- Open containers of milk, whipping cream
- Cottage cheese, sour cream, cream cheese
- Cut melons
- Gravy, stews or soups
- Cooked meat loaf, chicken
- Leftovers from hot or cold holding buffets or salad bars

These are examples of food that may need date coding. A complete list of potentially hazardous food is available at www.fda.gov/food.



Date Coding Rule

Easy rule to remember: The day the item is prepared or the package is opened is counted as day one, and requires date coding if held for more than 24 hours.

SKU **BBQ Baked Beans**
PREP DATE: **05/08/10** PREP TIME: **11:00 AM**



USE BY: **05/11/10** **11:00 AM**
Tuesday (MARTES)



What about freezing?

The clock stops when you freeze food. The clock does not reset when food is brought to refrigeration temperatures. It resumes when the food is no longer frozen.

When does date coding end?

Date coding must follow the food throughout its life, from beginning to end (maximum seven days/41° F or lower in refrigeration).

Is it required to date code all PHF/TCS* foods that are cooked/cooled in the establishment?

Yes. The FDA Food Code requires all refrigerated, ready-to-eat, PHF/TCS* foods held more than 24 hours to be date coded, unless they are specifically exempted.

Are commercially prepared fruit salads containing melons subject to date coding?

Yes. Sliced melons are a PHF food and therefore require date coding if held more than 24 hours.

How about large containers of pizza toppings and other items that could be consumed in their ready-to-eat form. Are they required to be date coded?

Yes. All refrigerated, ready-to-eat, PHF/TCS foods held more than 24 hours must be date coded.

What about cheese sliced or cut upon request?

Yes. Unless the type of cheese is specifically exempt, it needs to be date coded.

What about milk?

Yes. Milk held more than 24 hours, must be date coded.

Are there any deli items that do not need to be date coded?

If lunchmeat is not labeled as “keep refrigerated” then date coding is not required. Examples of items that do not require date coding include:

- Shelf-stable dry fermented sausages - pepperoni and genoa salami.
- Shelf-stable salt-cured products - prosciutto and parma ham.
- Acidified vegetable items (pickles) - do not need to be date coded.

For more information as well as updates to the FDA Food Code, visit www.fda.gov/food or contact your local health inspector.

