



**Why should you Date Mark Ready-To Eat Potentially Hazardous Foods (RTE-PHF)?**

Refrigeration prevents food from becoming a hazard by significantly slowing the growth of most harmful bacteria (microbes), but does not kill the microbes. *Listeria Monocytogenes (LM)* is one bacterium of many nasty culprits that make date marking extremely important, because it does grow at cold temperatures.

**How long is RTE-PHF kept?**

Based on the growth of *LM*, ready-to-eat, potentially hazardous food (time/temperature control for safety of food) must be kept at 41°F or below and not more than 7 days. This does not include the time the food was in a freezer. Day one is the day the food is prepared. Once a commercially packaged Ready-to-Eat food is open the seven day count begins.

**How to date mark RTE-PHF's?**

A date marking system must be used which places dates on the food container. The system must be consistent and clear to all employees. Use stickers or plastic wrap on the food container, which identifies the first day of preparation or alternatively, may identify the last day that the food may be sold or consumed on the premises.

**Examples of food that need to be date marked:**

Deli salads prepared in an establishment	Cooked soups
Fresh cut leafy greens	Cooked meat (pulled pork, chicken, steaks)
Deli meats ( lunch meats)	Some soft cheese such as Feta cheese
Cooked rice	Cooked beans

Hot dogs	Mashed potatoes
Cooked baked potatoes	Cooked Sauces
Salsa	

**Examples of food that is exempt from datemarking:**

Hard cheeses:	Soft cheeses:
Asadero	Asiago soft
Cheddar	Blue
Colby	Gorgonzola(blue-veined)
Parmesan	Havarti
Romano	Monterey
Swiss	Gouda
Abertam	Gjetost
Appenzeller	Gruyere
Assiago medium or old	Herve
Bra	Lapland
Christalina	Lorraine
Cotija Anejo	Oazaca
Coon	Pecorino
Derby	Queso Anejo
Emmertaler	Queso de Prensa
English Dairy	Romanello
Gex (blue veined)	Reggiano
Gloucester	Sapsago
<b>Cultured Dairy Products:</b>	<b>Deli Salads prepared in a food processing plant:</b>
Yogurt	Potato salad
Sour cream	Macaroni salad
Buttermilk	

These are not all of the cheeses exempt; please contact your local Environmental Health Specialist if you have questions.

