



Date Marking



What is date marking and how is it used?

Date marking is a way to ensure food safety. It is also the law. OAR 333-150-0000 Chapter 3-501.17 & 3-501.18 **Foods without required date marking shall be discarded.** Date marking is an identification system for ready-to-eat foods held over 24 hours, so you know how old they are. The system helps to identify either when the food was prepared, or when it is to be discarded.

How do I know if a food needs to be date marked?

If you answer yes to all 5 of these questions then the food must be date marked.



organism growth?

1. Does the food require refrigeration?
2. If commercially packaged, has the original package been opened?
3. Is the food ready-to-eat? "Ready-to-eat food" means food that is in a form that is edible without washing, cooking, or additional preparation by the food establishment.
4. Is the food potentially hazardous? Will it grow bacteria? Will the food support bacterial food-borne organism growth?
5. Will the food be in the establishment for more than 24 hours? This counts even if the food is, or will be, mixed with something else to form a new ready-to-eat product.

If you answered **YES** to all 5 of these questions, then the food needs to be date marked.

When to discard?

Refrigerator is at 42-45°F = discard within 4 days

Refrigerator is at 41°F or below = discard within 7 days

Common date marking questions

If the food has an expiration date on it, isn't that the same as a date mark?

No, the expiration date is the date through which the manufacturer guarantees the food will meet their quality standards. Date marking for discard ensures the safety of the food.



This establishment goes through this food so fast, if it is going to be gone in less than 4 or 7 days do I still need to date mark it?

Yes, if the food is not going to be served or discarded within 24 hours, it must be date marked.

What if I freeze the food?

Freezing food stops the date marking clock but does not reset it. So if a food item is stored at 45°F for 2 days and then frozen, it can still be stored at 45°F for 2 more days when it begins to thaw. The freezing date and the thawing date need to be put on the container along with the prep date, or thawing date and an indication of how many of the original 4 or 7 days have been used. If food is not dated with these dates, it must be used or discarded within 24 hours.

What if I mix the food with something else?

When foods are mixed together the date of the **oldest** food becomes the new date. Example, if today is Wednesday, and you are mixing a food that was marked on Monday with a food that was marked on Tuesday, the mixed food marking would be based on a starting date of Monday.

Are there any exceptions? Yes,

- Uncut portions of processed cured meats packaged in cellulose, like salami and bologna do not need to be date marked.
- Hard cheeses like Asiago old, Cheddar, Gruyere, Parmesan, Romano and Sapsago do not need to be date marked.
- Semi soft cheeses like Asiago fresh, Soft, Blue, Brick, Colby, Edam, Gouda, Monterey, Pasteurized processed cheese, Provolone and Swiss do not need to be date marked.
- Soft cheeses like Brie, Camembert, Cottage, Ricotta and Teleme **must** be date marked. Note: listeria monocytogenes is associated with soft cheeses.
- Commercial acidified dressing like mayonnaise and thousand island do not need to be date marked.

