

Food Code Section 3-501.17

Ready-to-Eat, Time/Temperature Control for Safety Food, Date Marking



Section 3-501.17 specifies ready-to-eat, time/temperature control for safety (TCS) food prepared in a food establishment and held longer than a 24 hour period shall be marked to indicate the date or day by which the food is to be consumed on the premises, sold, or discarded when held at a temperature of 5°C (41°F) or less for a maximum of 7 days. These time/temperature parameters are intended to help control for growth of *Listeria monocytogenes*.

The FDA Food Code does not specify a particular date marking label, nor does it specify that the time the food was prepared be captured on the label. However, section 3-501.17 provides parameters to work within and allows for flexibility in creating a system that works for each food establishment. An establishment can choose to be as precise as needed in date marking as long as the parameters set forth within section 3-501.17 are met. A date marking system may use calendar dates, days of the week, color-coded marks, or other effective means in order to comply with section 3-501.17. Examples of the date or day by which the food should be consumed, sold, or discarded based on the type of datemarking system used can be found below:

	Sunday March 25	Monday March 26	Tuesday March 27	Wednesday March 28	Thursday March 29	Friday March 30	Saturday March 31	Sunday April 1
Date Only								
Food is labeled: March 31	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7 Discard by midnight on Saturday, March 31	
Day Only								
Food is labeled: Saturday	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7 Discard by midnight on Saturday	
Date and Time								
Food is labeled: April 1, 2018 10:00 pm		Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7 Discard by 10pm on Sunday, April 1, 2018