

Bacteria such as Listeria can grow in refrigerated foods. That is why cold, ready-to-eat time/temperature control for safety (TCS) food prepared on-site or stored in an opened or unsealed commercial package must be served, sold, frozen, or discarded within seven days.

Cold, ready-to-eat TCS food kept for more than 24 hours must be date marked with either a prep/open date or discard date to ensure it is used or frozen within seven days.

When you open or prepare cold, ready-to-eat TCS foods, mark the date right away.

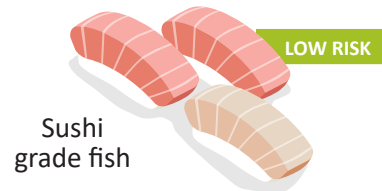
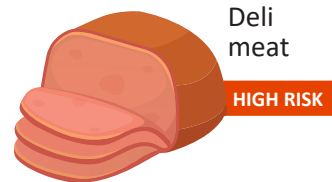
Foods that do not need a date mark

- Unopened commercial packages
- Commercially cultured dairy products - *such as buttermilk, sour cream, and yogurt*
- Commercially pre-made dressing, deli salads
- Commercially preserved fish products
- Hard cheese - *such as cheddar & Swiss*
- Whole, uncut produce
- Foods not ready to eat
- Shellstock



Foods that need a date mark

Cold, ready-to-eat TCS food kept for more than 24 hours



Serve or discard ready-to-eat foods within 7 days after the package is opened or food is prepared

Start with the day it is prepared or opened and add six days. Food made on Friday must be discarded or used by the following Thursday.



Days in the freezer do not count. Label food with date it was placed in the freezer and the date it was put back in the refrigerator.



Refrigerators must maintain food temperatures at 41°F or below.

If food was stored in the refrigerator for three days and then frozen, it must be used or discarded within four days of being placed back into the refrigerator.

Make sure whatever system is used is consistent and easy for everyone to understand and can be explained to regulatory authority.

Some foods are exempt from requirements. See WAC 246-215-03526 for more details.



Example