

Changes to Cold Holding Temperatures and Date Marking

Did you know? On January 1, 2019, the cold holding temperature requirement for Time/Temperature Control for Safety (TCS) foods will change from 45°F to 41°F. This requirement will change some of the date marking requirements in NC.

Date Marking

According to the FDA Food Code, Annex 3, the rationale for the date marking requirement is:

“Based on a predictive growth curve modeling program for *Listeria monocytogenes*, ready-to-eat, TCS foods may be kept at 5°C (41°F) a total of 7 days. Food which is prepared and held, or prepared, frozen, and thawed must be controlled by date marking to ensure its safety based on the total amount of time it was held at refrigeration temperature, and the opportunity for *Listeria monocytogenes* to multiply, before freezing and after thawing.”

Before January 1, 2019

There are currently two different allowances in the NC Food Code for date marking of ready-to-eat, TCS foods in Section 3-501.17

- Held for a maximum of 7 days if 41°F or below
- Held for a maximum of 4 days if between 41°F and 45°F

This requirement was necessary to provide safe compliance options until 41°F is required after January 1, 2019.

There will only be one option for date marking compliance after January 1, 2019

The requirement for NC Food Code Section 3-501.17 after January 1, 2019 will be that ready-to-eat, TCS foods can be held for a maximum of 7 days at 41°F or below.

All other components of date marking rules will still be required.

- Date marking begins with day of preparation being Day 1
- Exemptions for hard and semi-soft cheeses, commercially made deli salads, and some fermented meats will still apply
- Freezing can still stop the clock on date marking, but does not reset it
- When mixing ingredients together to make a new food, the earliest date or the first-prepped date must be retained

How to Prepare

- Take temperatures of all cooler units, at varying times to determine if food is below 41°F
- Train food service employees on new cold holding and date marking requirements
- **Ensure that by January 1, 2019, all ready-to-eat, TCS foods are held 41°F or below for a maximum of 7 days**