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

(Sample SOP)

**PURPOSE:** To ensure appropriate rotation of ready-to-eat food to prevent or reduce foodborne illness from *Listeria monocytogenes.*

**SCOPE:** This procedure applies to school nutrition employees who prepare, store, or serve food.

**KEY WORDS:** Ready-to-Eat Food, Time/Temperature Control for Safety Foods, Date Marking, Cross Contamination, TCS Foods

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

1. Train school nutrition employees on using the procedures in this SOP.
2. The best practice for a date marking system would be to include a label with the product name, the day or date, and time it is prepared or opened. Examples of how to indicate when the food is prepared or opened include:

* Labeling food with a calendar date, such as “cut cantaloupe, 2/20/17, 8:00 a.m.,”
* Identifying the day of the week, such as “cut cantaloupe, Monday, 8:00 a.m.,” or
* Using color-coded marks or tags, such as cut cantaloupe, blue dot, 8:00 a.m. means “cut on Monday at 8:00 a.m.”

1. Follow state or local health department requirements.
2. Label ready-to-eat, time/temperature control for safety foods that are prepared on-site and held for more than 24 hours.
3. Label any processed, ready-to-eat, time/temperature control for safety foods when opened, if they are to be held for more than 24 hours.
4. Refrigerate all ready-to-eat, time/temperature control for safety foods at 41 ºF or below.
5. Serve or discard refrigerated, ready-to-eat, time/temperature control for safety foods within 7 days.
6. Indicate with a separate label the date prepared, the date frozen, and the date thawed of any refrigerated, ready-to-eat, time/temperature control for safety foods.
7. Calculate the 7-day time period by counting only the days that the food is under refrigeration. For example:
   * On Monday, 2/27/17, lasagna is cooked, properly cooled, and refrigerated with a label that reads, “Lasagna, Cooked, 2/27/17.”

**Date Marking Ready-to-Eat, Time/Temperature Control for Safety Foods, continued**

(Sample SOP)

**INSTRUCTIONS, continued:**

* + On Tuesday, 2/28/17, the lasagna is frozen with a second label that reads, “Frozen, 2/28/17.” Two labels now appear on the lasagna. Since the lasagna was held under refrigeration from Monday, 2/27/17 – Tuesday, 2/28/17, only 1 day is counted towards the 7-day time period.
  + On Tuesday 3/7/17, the lasagna is pulled out of the freezer. A third label is placed on the lasagna that reads, “Thawed, 3/7/17.” All three labels now appear on the lasagna. The lasagna must be served or discarded within 6 days.

**MONITORING:**

A designated employee will check refrigerators daily to verify that foods are date marked and that foods exceeding the 7-day time period are not being used or stored.

**CORRECTIVE ACTION:**

1. Retrain any school nutrition employee found not following the procedures in this SOP.
2. Foods that are not date marked or that exceed the 7-day time period will be discarded.

**VERIFICATION AND RECORD KEEPING:**

The school nutrition manager will complete the Food Safety Checklist daily. The Food Safety Checklist is to be kept on file for a minimum of 1 year.

**DATE IMPLEMENTED: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ BY: ­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**DATE REVIEWED: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ BY: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**DATE REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ BY: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**