HACCP-Based SOPs

Date Marking Ready-to-Eat, Potentially Hazardous Food

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

SCOPE: This procedure applies to foodservice employees who prepare, store, or serve food.

KEY WORDS: Ready-to-Eat Food, Potentially Hazardous Food, Date Marking, Cross-Contamination

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Train foodservice employees on using the procedures in this SOP. 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, 5/26/05, 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.

2. Follow State or local health department requirements.

3. Label ready-to-eat, potentially hazardous foods that are prepared on-site and held for more than 24 hours.

4. Label any processed, ready-to-eat, potentially hazardous foods when opened, if they are to be held for more than 24 hours.

5. Refrigerate all ready-to-eat, potentially hazardous foods at 5 ºC or below.

6. Serve or discard refrigerated, ready-to-eat, potentially hazardous foods within 7 days.

7. Indicate with a separate label the date prepared, the date frozen, and the date thawed of any refrigerated, ready-to-eat, potentially hazardous foods.

8. Calculate the 7-day time period by counting only the days that the food is under refrigeration. For example:
   - On Monday, 1/8/05, lasagna is cooked, properly cooled, and refrigerated with a label that reads, “Lasagna, Cooked, 1/8/05.”
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• On Tuesday, 2/8/05, the lasagna is frozen with a second label that reads, “Frozen, 2/8/05.” Two labels now appear on the lasagna. Since the lasagna was held under refrigeration from Monday, 1/8/05 – Tuesday, 2/8/05, only 1 day is counted towards the 7-day time period.

• On Tuesday 16/8/05 the lasagna is pulled out of the freezer. A third label is placed on the lasagna that reads, “Thawed, 16/8/05.” 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 foodservice 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.