

OS/17: Dating and labelling of food

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 When calculating the shelf life of food that has been decanted from its aseptic packaging or that of a ready-to-eat dish a 'use-by' date will be the only type of date label accepted in order to secure the safety of food items. 'Use-by' dates must not compromise the health and wellbeing of consumers.
- 1.2 It will be a criminal offence to sell, or have in possession for sale, food that has passed its 'use-by' date.

2.0 Chilled perishable food (bought-in)

- 2.1 The shelf life set by the manufacturer/supplier is only valid whilst food is stored in the aseptic packaging and at the correct storage temperature.
- 2.2 Once opened, a new 'use-by' date must be calculated and affixed. This can be done by observing the manufacturers'/suppliers' storage guidelines on the packaging.
- 2.3 If the manufacturers'/suppliers' storage guidelines are not readily available an appropriate shelf life must be calculated and clearly affixed.
- 2.4 If there is no evidence of the manufacturers'/suppliers' storage guidelines then advice shall be sought from the company in question.
- 2.5 Any such product must be used before the manufacturers'/suppliers' shelf life has expired.

3.0 Frozen food (bought-in)

- 3.1 The shelf life set by the manufacturer/supplier is only valid whilst the food is stored in the original, un-opened, aseptic packaging and stored at the correct storage temperature.
- 3.2 Once decanted from the freezer a 'defrost' and further 'use-by' date must be calculated and affixed. The latter can be calculated by observing the manufacturers'/suppliers' storage guidelines.
- 3.3 If there is no evidence of the manufacturers'/suppliers' storage guidelines then advice should be sought from the company in question.
- 3.4 Any such product must be used before the manufacturers'/suppliers' shelf life has expired.

4.0 Compound salads (prepared at unit-level)

- 4.1 Once completed, dates of 'production' and 'use-by' must be calculated and affixed.
- 4.2 Compound salads containing 'high-risk' food items would normally attract a 72 hour shelf life, however could be lengthened if proven that the health and wellbeing of consumers would not be compromised.
- 4.3 Composite ingredients used in the assembly of such salads must have an adequate shelf life and which must not expire before the 'use-by' date of the completed compound salad.

5.0 Ready-to-eat dishes (prepared at unit-level)

- 5.1 Once completed, the food handler must calculate and affix dates of 'production' and 'use-by'.

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5.2 Dishes containing 'high-risk' food items would normally attract a 48 hour shelf life, however could be extended if proven that the health and wellbeing of consumers is not to be compromised.

5.3 The shelf life of any composite ingredient used must not expire before the 'use-by' date of the completed ready-to-eat dish.

6.0 Bottled sauces, pickles and condiments

6.1 Once opened, such items must show a date of 'opening' and a 'use-by' date, the latter can be calculated by observing the manufacturers' storage guidelines.

6.2 If there is no evidence of the manufacturers'/suppliers' storage guidelines then advice should be sought from the company in question.

6.3 Any such product must be used before the manufacturers'/suppliers' shelf life has expired.

7.0 Date labelling system

7.1 It will be the responsibility of the manager to identify, document, implement and maintain an appropriate system for date labelling within respective outlets.

7.2 It will be the responsibility of the manager to make all staff under their control aware of the date labelling system in operation.

Version	Date of issue	Author	Endorsed by
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