OS/13: Blast freezing food

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Blast-freezing is based on the full cooking of food followed by rapid freezing with a subsequent storage temperature no greater than -18°C being effectively implemented and managed.

2.0 Procedure for dishes cooked on-site

2.1 Wet products such as; casseroles, pies, lasagne etc. must be decanted to a maximum depth of 64mm/2½ inches to ensure rapid freezing of products.

2.2 The freezing process must commence within 30 minutes on completion of the cooking process.

2.3 Food must reach a core temperature of -5°C within 90 minutes upon commencement of the freezing process. From the cooker until the food reaches -5°C must take no longer than 2 hours.

2.4 When freezing joints of meat/poultry the size should be kept to a minimum. It is considered 'best practice' to keep the size to a minimum e.g. no larger than 2.5 kilos/6lbs in weight to facilitate rapid cooling.

2.5 Where it is not practicable to freeze joints of meat/poultry to -5°C within 90 minutes, one alternative method can be put into operation:

- slice hot, immediately after cooking, then transfer the slices into the blast-freezer within 30 minutes of the joints leaving the oven. **NB:** this method may give rise to dehydration of the product during the chilling process.

2.6 A subsequent temperature of -18°C must be achieved as rapidly as possible.

2.7 On completion of freezing, all foods must be effectively wrapped

2.8 Both a 'freeze' and 'best-before' date must be calculated and affixed to each product. The 'best-before' date must not exceed 9 months from the date of freezing.

2.9 Food must be placed immediately into a freezer capable of maintaining a stable temperature of -18°C.

2.10 Throughout the freezing process times and temperatures must be recorded on the appropriate control sheet, of which shall be retained for a total of 13 weeks after the product has been consumed. Refer to ***TM/10: Blast freezing of food***.

2.11 On decanting products from the freezer the 'best-before' date will be rendered invalid.

2.12 On decanting products from the freezer a 'defrost' date must be affixed with a 'use-by' date, the latter must not exceed 3-days on decanting from the freezer.

3.0 Procedure for raw products

3.1 It is not deemed 'best practice' to blast freeze these types of foods. Excessive blast freezing of these types of foods would highlight an issue with the ordering system and/or stock rotation.

3.2 The blast-freeze cycle must take place before the suppliers' 'use-by' date expires. Foods with less than a three-day shelf life left must not be blast frozen, as this will ultimately have an effect on the length of shelf life in place, once decanted from the freezer.

3.3 The suppliers 'use-by' date must be left intact, legible and visible during the blast-freeze cycle and subsequent frozen storage.

3.4 On completion of the blast-freeze cycle a 'freeze' date and a 'best-before' date must be calculated and affixed, the latter must not exceed 9-months and will only be valid whilst the food is held in frozen storage.

3.5 On decanting such products from the freezer the 'best-before' date will be rendered invalid.

3.6 On decanting such products from the freezer a 'defrost' date must be affixed along with a 'use-by' date, the latter must be calculated taking in to consideration the shelf life left when the product was initially frozen down.

3.7 The 'use-by' date must not exceed the period of time between the suppliers' original 'use-by' date and the date of 'freezing'.

Version	Date of issue	Author	Endorsed by
V3	30th June 2019	Graham Day; Health & Safety Adviser	Graham Hakes; Senior Health & Safety Adviser