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To Whom it May Concern:

Mrs. Fields® cookie doughs from Fundraising Manager are specially formulated to be low-moisture, and though cookie doughs must still be baked before consuming for safety, it is this low water activity characteristic which allows the raw dough to be unrefrigerated without spoiling.

To confirm the stability of the product at ambient temperatures, we sent raw cookie dough samples to an independent third-party laboratory which specializes in shelf-life testing of food products. Cookie dough samples were tested for chemical, microbial, and sensory properties throughout the 21-day testing period. The laboratory found that as formulated, the water activity of each cookie dough was below 0.77 throughout the study, well below the 0.85 level generally recognized by the FDA as the threshold below which refrigeration is not necessary for food safety. (*Hazard Analysis and Risk-Based Preventive Controls for Human Food: Draft Guidance for Industry*. Chapter 4, p 22. January 2024.) According to the laboratory report, the microbial results indicate that each cookie dough type is shelf-stable for 21 days at room temperature.

This stability at ambient temperatures, however, refers only to the incapacity of the doughs to support the outgrowth of microorganisms. From a *quality* standpoint, the general appearance of each cookie dough sample deviated significantly from the initial evaluation over time at ambient temperature, and was unacceptable by Day 6. Therefore, based on sensory results from the laboratory, no more than a 4-day shelf life at ambient temperatures is recommended for each of the cookie dough types for the best quality. Product left at ambient temperatures beyond Day 4 will begin to degrade significantly and will not be visually appealing to consumers.

Last, it is also important to note again that raw cookie dough must still be thoroughly cooked before eating. Do not eat raw cookie dough. For safety, consumers should bake directly from frozen and must follow cooking instructions on the package.

Sincerely,

Rodger Abbott
Food Safety & Quality Assurance Manager