

TOOLS, TIPS & INFORMATION FOR THE KITCHEN ~

Hot & Cold Food Temperatures

Temperature maintenance of food and equipment is very important for food safety. We know that bacteria grow very rapidly between 41 °F and 135 °F—the temperature range known as the temperature danger zone. At every step from receiving to serving, it is important to limit the time that food is in the temperature danger zone.

Take active steps to reduce the amount of time food is held in the temperature danger zone:

- Receive, prepare, hold, serve, and chill foods at proper temperatures
- Use a clean, sanitized, and calibrated thermometer to take food temperatures
- Record temperatures
- Maintain temperature logs

Maintaining appropriate temperatures will:

- Ensure that food is safe for children to eat.
- Minimize bacterial growth. Bacteria multiply quickly in food when in the temperature danger zone, which may make food unsafe to eat.
- Maintain the quality of food.

Potentially Hazardous Foods (PHFs)

Potentially hazardous foods (PHFs) are foods that require time and temperature control in order to prevent bacteria growth. The following foods are considered PHFs:

- Food from an animal origin that is raw or heat-treated. Some examples are eggs, milk, meat, and poultry
- Food from a plant origin that is heat-treated. Some examples are cooked rice, cooked potatoes, and cooked noodles
- Raw seed sprouts
- Cut melons, including watermelon, cantaloupe, and honeydew.
- Garlic and oil mixtures

It takes everyone to keep food safe and out of the temperature danger zone. Remember to follow state or local health department requirements



MAINTAIN TEMPERATURES AT EACH OPERATIONAL STEP IN THE FLOW OF FOOD FROM RECEIVING TO STORING

Receiving – Receive refrigerated foods at 41 °F or below, and frozen foods at 0 °F or below. Be sure to record temperatures at receiving.

Storing – Store refrigerated foods at 41 °F or below, and store frozen foods at 0 °F or below. Dry storage areas should be maintained at 50 °F to 70 °F.

Preparing – Batch cooking hot and cold foods is the best way to limit time. Limit the time for preparation of any batches of food so that the ingredients are not at room temperature for more than 30 minutes before cooking, serving, or returning to the refrigerator. Monitor time and temperature of foods during preparation. Use a clean, sanitized, and calibrated thermometer to check temperatures. Take at least 2 internal temperatures of food at various stages of preparation. Monitor the amount of time that food is in the temperature danger zone. It should not exceed 4 hours. Discard food held in the temperature danger zone for more than 4 hours.

Cooking – The appropriate temperature for cooking foods is based on temperatures that will kill bacteria associated with that specific food. It is important to know the temperature requirements for menu items used in your child nutrition program. Check food temperatures with clean, sanitized, and calibrated thermometers. Take at least 2 internal temperatures from each batch of food. Record the temperature and the time the temperature was checked. Take corrective action if appropriate temperatures are not met.

145 °F for 15 seconds

- Beef, pork, and seafood

165 °F for 15 seconds

- Poultry
- Stuffed beef, pork, or seafood
- Pasta stuffed with beef, eggs, pork, or seafood (lasagna/manicotti)

155 °F for 15 seconds

- Ground products containing beef, pork, or fish
- Fish nuggets or sticks
- Cubed or Salisbury steaks

135 °F for 15 seconds

- Fresh, frozen, or canned fruits and vegetables cooked for hot holding
- Ready-to-eat food that has been commercially processed and comes directly from intact packaging from the food processor

Holding – Schedule food production to minimize the time that food is maintained on the serving line. Hold cold foods at 41 °F or below and hot foods at 135 °F or above. Record the temperature and the time the temperature was checked. Discard food held in the temperature danger zone for more than 4 hours.

Serving – Serve cold food cold and hot food hot. Keep cold food below 41 °F and hot food above 135 °F. Check and maintain proper temperatures. Record the temperature and the time the temperature was checked. Cover food between serving periods.

Cooling – Cool foods as quickly as possible. The *FDA Food Code* requires that foods be cooled from 135 °F to 70 °F within 2 hours and from 70 °F to 41 °F within 4 hours. If food is not cooled from 135 °F to 70 °F within 2 hours, the food must be reheated to 165 °F for 15 seconds and the cooling process started. Record the temperature and the time the temperature was checked. Take actions to speed the cooling process by dividing food into smaller portions, using ice water baths, using an ice paddle, and stirring.

Reheating – Reheat all leftover foods to 165 °F for 15 seconds within 2 hours.

Transporting – Transport cold foods cold at 41 °F or below, and hot foods hot at 135 °F or above.

