

Food Safety Fact Sheet

Controlling Time and Temperature During Preparation

INTRODUCTION

Preparation is an important step in the foodservice process. School nutrition employees can use good food handling practices during preparation to ensure that food temperatures are controlled and the time that foods are in the temperature danger zone is minimized.

HERE ARE THE FACTS

The temperature danger zone, between 41 °F and 135 °F, is the temperature range in which bacteria grow most rapidly.

APPLICATION

Limit the time that foods are in the temperature danger zone during preparation.

- Pre-chill ingredients for cold foods, such as sandwiches, salads, and cut fruits, to 41 °F or below before combining with other ingredients.
- Prepare foods as close to serving times as the menu will allow.
- Prepare food in small batches. For example, when assembling deli sandwiches, remove only enough meat and cheese to prepare 25 sandwiches. Return the sandwiches to the refrigerator and then remove enough meat and cheese to prepare another 25 sandwiches.
- 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.
- Chill all cold foods as quickly as possible.

Monitor the time and temperatures of foods during preparation.

- Use a clean, sanitized, and calibrated thermometer (preferably a thermocouple) to check temperatures.
- Take at least two internal temperatures from each pan 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.

Take corrective action to make sure that time and temperature are maintained during preparation.

- Begin the cooking process immediately after preparation for any foods that will be served hot.
- Cool rapidly any ready-to-eat foods or foods that will be cooked at a later time.
- Return ingredients to the refrigerator if the anticipated preparation time is expected to exceed 30 minutes.
- Discard food held in the temperature danger zone for more than 4 hours.

Remember, follow state or local health department requirements.





Controlling Time and Temperature During Preparation cont.

References

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