

Food Safety Fact Sheet

Holding Cold Foods

INTRODUCTION

Holding is a point at which maintaining proper temperatures can help ensure that a food is safe to eat. Cooks and servers must know the proper temperature for holding food, monitor the holding process, and record temperatures of foods during holding.

HERE ARE THE FACTS

The FDA *Food Code* requires that all cold foods be maintained at 41 °F or below. When temperatures of food are above 41 °F, they are in the temperature danger zone—temperatures at which pathogens grow rapidly. Research has shown that inadequate cold holding temperatures are a problem in many foodservice operations.

APPLICATION

Hold cold foods at 41 °F or below.

- Pre-chill ingredients for items to be served cold.
- Schedule food production to minimize the time that food is maintained on the serving line.
- Use batch preparation for cold items to minimize the time that ingredients and completed foods are at room temperature.

Monitor holding process for cold foods.

- Check temperature of all cold holding units by placing a calibrated thermometer in the warmest part of the holding unit. The unit should be 41 °F or below.
- Check internal temperatures of cold food with a clean, sanitized, and calibrated thermometer.
- Take at least two internal temperatures from each batch of food during holding.
- Insert thermometer into the thickest part of the food, which usually is in the center.
- Record the temperature and the time the temperature is checked.

Take corrective action if appropriate holding temperature of cold food is not met.

- Rapidly chill food using an appropriate cooling method if the temperature is found to be above 41 °F, and the last temperature taken was 41 °F or below and taken within the last 2 hours.
 - ◊ Place food in shallow containers (no more than 2 inches deep) and uncovered on the top shelf in the back of the walk-in or reach-in cooler.
 - ◊ Use a quick chill unit, such as a blast chiller.
 - ◊ Stir the food in a container placed in an ice water bath.
 - ◊ Separate food into smaller or thinner portions.
- Repair or reset holding equipment before returning the food to the unit, if applicable.





Holding Cold Foods cont.

- Discard food if it cannot be determined how long the food temperature was above 41 °F.
- Record corrective actions taken.

Remember, follow state or local health department requirements.

References

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