

# Food Safety Fact Sheet

## Holding Hot Foods

### INTRODUCTION

Holding is a critical control point, or a point at which maintaining proper temperatures can help ensure that a food is safe to eat. Cooks 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 hot foods be maintained at 135 °F or above. When temperatures of food fall below 135 °F, they are in the temperature danger zone—temperatures at which bacteria grow rapidly.

### APPLICATION

#### Hold hot foods at 135 °F or above.

- Preheat steam tables and hot holding cabinets.
- Schedule food production to minimize the time that food is maintained on a steam table or other hot holding unit.

#### Monitor holding process for hot foods.

- Check temperature of hot holding units by placing a calibrated thermometer in the coolest part of the holding unit.
- Check food temperatures with a clean, sanitized, and calibrated thermometer.
- Check food temperatures when product is placed in steam table or hot holding unit and at least every 2 hours thereafter.
- 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 was checked.

#### Take corrective action if appropriate holding temperature of the hot food is not met.

- Reheat food to 165 °F for 15 seconds if the temperature is found to be below 135 °F and the last temperature measurement was 135 °F or higher and taken within the last 2 hours.
- Repair or reset holding equipment before returning the food to the unit if temperatures are not maintained.
- Discard food if it cannot be determined how long the food temperature was below 135 °F.
- Record corrective actions taken.

**Remember, follow state or local health department requirements.**





# Holding Hot Foods cont.

## References

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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Public Health Services, Food and Drug Administration. (2013). *FDA food code*. Retrieved from <http://www.fda.gov/food/guidanceregulation/retailfoodprotection/foodcode/ucm374275.htm>

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