

# 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

- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, & Institute of Child Nutrition. (2015). *Food safety in schools*. University, MS. Author.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, & Institute of Child Nutrition. (2016). *HACCP-based standard operating procedures: Holding hot and cold time/temperature control for safety foods*. Retrieved from <http://www.nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=75>
- 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>
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration. (2009) *FDA report on the occurrence of foodborne illness risk factors in selected institutional foodservice, restaurant, and retail food store facility types*. Retrieved from <http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/RetailFoodProtection/FoodborneIllnessRiskFactorReduction/ucm224321.htm>

This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service through an agreement with Institute of Child Nutrition at The University of Mississippi. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. government.

The University of Mississippi is an EEO/AA/TitleVI/Title IX/Section 504/ADA/ADEA Employer.

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights; Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

© 2016, Institute of Child Nutrition, The University of Mississippi, School of Applied Sciences

Except as provided below, you may freely use the text and information contained in this document for non-profit or educational use with no cost to the participant for the training providing the following credit is included. These materials may not be incorporated into other websites or textbooks and may not be sold.

Suggested Reference Citation:  
Institute of Child Nutrition. (2016). *Holding cold foods*. University, MS: Author.

The photographs and images in this document may be owned by third parties and used by The University of Mississippi under a licensing agreement. The University cannot, therefore, grant permission to use these images.

For more information, please contact [helpdesk@theicn.org](mailto:helpdesk@theicn.org).