

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

- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, & Institute of Child Nutrition. (2015). *Food safety in schools*. University, MS. Author.
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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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