# Quick Food Safety Guide for Food Service Workers



This document describes food safety best practices for food service workers. Follow these guidelines to ensure that food is stored, prepared and served safely.

#### CONTENTS

Receiving Food Safely	_ 1
Storing Food Safely	_ 2
Preparing Food Safely	_ 3
Preventing Cross-Contamination of Food	5
Using Gloves Properly	_ 7
Manually Cleaning Dishes and Equipment	_ 8
Keeping Pests Out	_ 9

# **Receiving Food Safely**

### How to Receive Potentially Hazardous Foods:

Potentially hazardous foods (PHFs) - also called Time and Temperature Control for Safety (TCS) foods - are more likely to support the growth of harmful bacteria and toxins. Examples include milk and milk products; eggs; meat; poultry; fish; shellfish; tofu; cooked pasta, rice, potatoes and beans; cut leafy greens and cut tomatoes. PHFs need to be stored, handled and prepared carefully.

- Make sure the delivery truck is clean and keeps foods at proper temperatures.
- Make sure that all PHFs are delivered at proper temperatures:
  - 140 degrees Fahrenheit or higher for hot food
  - 45 degrees Fahrenheit for raw shell eggs
  - 41 degrees Fahrenheit for cold food
  - 38 degrees Fahrenheit for smoked fish
  - 0 degrees Fahrenheit or below for frozen foods
- Look for proper tags when receiving shellfish.

### How to Receive Dry Foods, Produce and **Packaged Foods:**

- Make sure that all packages are intact and undamaged.
- Look for rodent gnaw marks, insects or insect eggs.
- Check sell-by or use-by dates to make sure products are delivered long before they expire.
- Do not use dented, leaking, rusted or swollen canned goods.
- Make sure fruits and vegetables are not bruised, wilted or spoiled.

#### WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Mark received a shipment of raw chicken breasts. He checked the meat temperature and found that it was 58 degrees Fahrenheit. He noticed the truck was not refrigerated, and that the ice had completely melted.

# **Storing Food Safely**

# **Preparing Food Safely**

#### NOTES

#### **General Tips:**

- Write the date on food products when you receive them and use the oldest products first to reduce food waste. This practice is called First-in, First-out (FIFO).
- Make sure all food storage and preparation areas are located away from overhead waste or condensation pipes.
- Store all food at least 6 inches above the floor so that the floor can be cleaned regularly.
- Store all food away from the walls or ceiling so that air can circulate.

#### For Dry Storage:

- Maintain humidity of 50 percent and a temperature of 70 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Look out for pest activity signs, such as rat or mouse droppings, insect eggs or odors.
- Store food in vermin-proof containers (e.g., metal or glass containers with tightly fitted lids).
- Remove dented, leaking, rusted, swollen or unlabeled canned goods.

#### For Cold Storage:

- Store all PHFs at proper temperatures:
  - 41 degrees Fahrenheit for cold food
  - 38 degrees Fahrenheit for smoked fish
  - 45 degrees Fahrenheit for raw shell eggs
  - 0 degrees Fahrenheit or below for frozen foods
- Maintain proper temperatures. Place a refrigeration thermometer in the warmest spot in the cold storage unit to measure ambient air temperature.
- Store cooked and ready-to-eat (RTE) food away from or above raw food.
- Watch for condensation that may contaminate food.
- Do not exceed the storage unit's capacity.

#### How to Cook Food Safely:

- Properly maintain cooking equipment (e.g., ovens, stoves, grills, salamanders, etc.) by cleaning and sanitizing them regularly and repairing when necessary.
- Cook food to the following minimum internal temperatures:
  - 165 degrees Fahrenheit for poultry, stuffed meats and stuffing
  - 158 degrees Fahrenheit for ground meats
  - 150 degrees Fahrenheit for pork and pork products
  - 145 degrees Fahrenheit for shell eggs
  - 140 degrees Fahrenheit for all other meats (e.g., lamb, fish, shellfish, etc.)
- Check the internal temperature by inserting the thermometer in various parts of the food, including the thickest part.
  - Always use clean thermometers to check temperatures.

#### How to Hot-Hold Foods:

- Preheat equipment before adding food.
- Maintain a temperature of 140 degrees Fahrenheit or higher for all foods.
- Check food temperatures with an accurate food thermometer and record them.
- Stir food frequently to make sure the entire dish is heated.

#### How to Cold-Hold Foods:

- Make sure the equipment is cold before adding food.
- Maintain a temperature of 41 degrees Fahrenheit or lower for all foods.
- Check food temperatures with an accurate food thermometer and record them.

#### WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

It was 15 minutes past lunch time and the food had not been served. Instead of making the guests wait any longer, the food service workers served the hamburgers when they had reached an internal temperature of 140 degrees Fahrenheit.

#### WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

James filled the cold holding table with macaroni salad just before lunch began at 11:00 a.m. At 2:00 p.m., he found that the cold holding table was not working and that the macaroni salad was warm.

#### WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

On Monday morning, Mandy made a 10-gallon pot of beef stew for Tuesday's lunch. After she finished cooking, she turned off the stove and let the stew cool in the pot. Before she went home, she placed the pot of beef stew in the refrigerator.

#### **REMEMBER:**

- Never refreeze thawed food.
- Never thaw frozen food at room temperature.
- Thaw raw food below cooked food to avoid cross-contamination.

# **Preparing Food Safely** continued

#### How to Cool Foods:

Cool foods from 140 degrees Fahrenheit to 70 degrees Fahrenheit within two hours, and from 70 degrees Fahrenheit to 41 degrees Fahrenheit within an additional four hours. Check that the food is cooling by taking food temperatures regularly.

To cool food quickly:

- Place food container in an ice bath and stir food using ice paddles.
  - To create an ice bath, fill a larger container or a culinary sink with a 50-50 ratio of water and ice.

#### OR

- Add ice to the food.
  - Prepare food with half the amount of water called for in the recipe, and add the remaining half as ice during the cooling process.

You can also try the following cooling methods:

- Place food in pans or containers no more than 4 inches high, with the food product no more than 2 inches deep.
- Divide food into smaller or thinner pieces or portions (no more than 6 pounds per portion).
- Stir food regularly to release trapped heat.
- Keep containers loosely covered or uncovered (if protected from overhead contamination).

#### How to Thaw/Defrost Foods:

There are four safe ways to thaw frozen food:

- 1. In a refrigeration unit at 41 degrees Fahrenheit or lower
- 2. Under cold (70 degrees Fahrenheit or lower) running water
- 3. In a microwave oven, if followed by a continuous cooking process
- 4. As part of the cooking process (for single portions)

# Preventing **Cross-Contamination of Food**

Cross-contamination happens when harmful microorganisms (e.g., bacteria) transfer from a raw or contaminated food to a cooked or RTE food.

## When Using Cutting Boards and Prep Tables:

 Wash, rinse and sanitize boards and tables when changing from raw to RTE food preparation, and between preparing different types of raw meat, fish and poultry.

#### When Handling Food:

- Do not touch RTE food with bare hands. Use gloves, tongs, a spatula, deli paper, spoon, fork or another utensil.
- Wash hands thoroughly and often. Always wash hands between tasks. See below for good hand-washing practices.

#### By Washing Hands:

Clean hands are an extremely important part of food safety. Hands must be washed often and thoroughly before starting work, after using the bathroom, after eating, after drinking, after smoking or after any activity when the hands have become contaminated. Handwashing involves five simple and effective steps:

- Wet hands using warm water.
- Apply soap and lather generously up to the elbow.
- Rub hands vigorously for at least 20 seconds; use a brush on the nails.
- Rinse hands thoroughly.
- Dry hands on disposable paper towels or a hot air dryer.

### NOTES

# **Preventing Cross-Contamination of Food** *continued*

# **Using Gloves Properly**

#### NOTES

When	Storing	Food	:
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- Store raw meat, fish and poultry below RTE food.
- Store raw meats in the following order from bottom to top:
- 1. Poultry
- 2. Ground meats
- 3. Pork
- 4. All other meats
- Keep seafood separate from other meats.
- Keep food that does not require further washing or cooking separate from food that does.

Using gloves does not replace good hand-washing practices!

- Always wear disposable gloves when you prepare or handle RTE foods.
- Before putting on gloves:
  - Wash hands thoroughly using good hand-washing practices.
  - Dry hands using a disposable paper towel.
- Use gloves for one task only and then discard.
- Replace gloves any time they become soiled or damaged, or when an interruption occurs during food preparation. Examples of an interruption include stepping away from the food preparation area or taking money from a customer.

#### WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Betty was wearing gloves when she started making sandwiches at 10:00 a.m. At 11:20 a.m., she removed her gloves, placed them on the counter and got some canned goods from the pantry. She then put her used gloves back on to prepare more sandwiches.

7

#### WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

To clean dishes, Jane washes them in a two-compartment sink. In the first compartment, she cleans them with a dishwashing liquid, and in the second, she rinses the dishes in clean water.

# **Manually Cleaning Dishes and** Equipment

- To prevent cross-contamination, make sure the dishwashing and drying areas are not next to the food preparation areas.
- Hand-wash dishes in a three-compartment sink only:
  - Wash dishes in the first sink.
  - Rinse dishes in the second sink.
  - Sanitize dishes in the third sink.
  - For heat sanitizing, water temperature must be at least 170 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, and the dishes must be covered for at least 30 seconds.
  - For chemical sanitizing, the chlorine-based sanitizer must be at least 50 parts per million (ppm), and the dishes must be covered for at least 30 seconds.
  - To make 50 ppm sanitizing solution, mix 1/2 ounce (or 1 tablespoon) of household bleach with one gallon of water.
- Air dry dishes.
- If items do not fit in the sink, use a 100-ppm sanitizing solution to wipe, pour on or spray the dishes.
  - To make 100-ppm sanitizing solution, mix 1 ounce (or 2 tablespoons) of household bleach with one gallon of water.
- Use an appropriate chlorine test kit to test the strength of sanitizers used.

# **Keeping Pests Out**

- Seal any holes, cracks or crevices in the facility.
  - Mice can squeeze through openings 1/4 inch in diameter; rats can get through openings 1/2 inch in diameter.
- Make sure all doors and windows fit tightly. Add sweeps to the bottom of doors to prevent rodents from entering through the gap between the door and the floor.
- Put screens on open windows and doors.
- Store food in pest-proof containers with tight-fitting lids.
- Keep food storage and preparation areas clean.
  - Clean up food debris and trash regularly.
  - Put food waste and other garbage into metal or hard plastic containers with tight-fitting lids.
  - Keep garbage staging areas clean.
- Keep the area outside the establishment clean.
  - Maintain proper drainage to reduce shelter areas for pests.
  - Control any weeds with herbicides designed to prevent pests.
  - Install outdoor light fixtures away from entrances and windows to reduce the presence of flying insects.
- If you have a pest problem, hire a licensed exterminator.

#### WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Meena has been seeing a lot of flies in the kitchen lately. One morning, before starting work, she uses a whole can of insecticide spray in the kitchen to kill as many flies as she can.

