

**GUIDELINES FOR SAFE FOOD
HOLDING TEMPERATURES**

Introduction

Failure to control food temperatures contributes to most foodborne illness outbreaks. Since disease-causing bacteria and microorganisms are able to multiply rapidly at temperatures between 41 °F and 135 °F, this is known as the Temperature Danger Zone.

Correct Holding Temperature

Bacterial growth can be controlled by keeping hot foods hot and cold foods cold.

- Hot foods should be kept at 135° F or higher.
 - Cold foods should be refrigerated at 41° F or below.
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Holding hot Foods

Safely hold hot foods by:

- Transferring cooked foods directly to an oven, steam table, or other hot-holding unit.
 - Stirring foods in hot-holding units at frequent intervals to evenly distribute heat.
 - Keeping a cover on foods to help maintain temperatures.
 - Breaking the chain of possible contamination. Never combine an old batch of food with a new batch.
 - Checking the temperature of the food on a frequent and regular basis. Use a clean and sanitized thermometer, and check temperatures in several locations of the food item. Write the temperatures down on a food temperature log. Do not rely solely on the thermostat gauges of the holding equipment; they may not accurately indicate the internal temperature of the food.
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Holding cold

Safely hold cold foods by:

- Keeping foods in cold-holding tables, commercial refrigerated display cases, or refrigerators. Ensure you have enough refrigeration for the types of products you plan to keep cold.
 - For salad bars and display units, setting the food containers in ice to keep them cold may assist refrigerated units or provide an excellent cooling medium. Keep ice levels as deep as the depth of the food products.
 - Keeping a cover, if possible, on foods held in cold holding units to help maintain temperatures.
 - Checking the temperature of the foods frequently. Use a clean, sanitized thermometer. Document the temperature of the food and the cold holding unit.
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