

Hot and Cold Holding Temperatures



All Time/Temperature Control for Safety (TCS) Foods, except those prepared for immediate consumption, shall be maintained in such a fashion as to prevent the growth or development of bacteria. When holding foods for service, such as a buffet line, always remember to keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. Hot holding equipment must be able to keep foods at a temperature of 135°F or higher, and cold holding equipment must be capable of keeping foods at a temperature of 41°F or colder.

HOT-HOLDING GUIDELINES:

- Stir the food at regular intervals, as it will help distribute heat evenly throughout the food
- Keep the food covered as coverings will help retain heat and eliminate potential contaminants from falling into the food.
- Use a food thermometer to measure the food's internal temperature every two hours.
- Discard any hot food after four hours if it has not been maintained at a temperature of 135°F or higher.

Other safety precautions regarding hot holding foods include never using hot holding equipment to reheat foods. Foods to be reheated must first be heated to an internal temperature of 165°F and then transferred to the hot holding equipment. Also, never mix freshly prepared food with foods being held for service as this practice can result in contaminated foods.

COLD-HOLDING GUIDELINES:

- Protect all foods from possible contamination by covering them or using food shields.
- Use a food thermometer to measure the food's internal temperature every two hours, and take corrective action whenever the temperature of a cold food items goes above 41°F.
- Only certain unpackaged foods may be stored in direct contact with undrained ice (e.g. whole raw fruits and vegetables, raw poultry and fish received on ice may remain on ice throughout storage display, and preparation).

Whenever you are dealing with questionable hot and cold holding practices, always resolve the issue in favor of food safety. It is better to discard TCS foods than risk your customers' health and safety. One way to avoid discarding too much food is to prepare and cook only as much food as you will use in a short period of time.

