

COOKING FOR GROUPS

The USDA recommends the following when you or your organization prepares food for groups. You should also contact your local or state health department to make sure that all regulations are followed:



Preparation-

Wash hands and surfaces often. Bacteria can be spread throughout the kitchen and get onto cutting boards, utensils, and counter tops. To prevent this:

- Wash hands with soap and warm water before and after handling food, and after using the bathroom, changing diapers, or handling pets.
- Use paper towels or clean cloths to wipe up kitchen surfaces or spills. Wash cloths often in the hot cycle of your washing machine.
- Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and counter tops with hot, soapy water after preparing each food item and before you go on to the next item. A solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented, liquid chlorine bleach in 1 gallon of water may be used to sanitize washed surfaces and utensils.

When cutting boards are used:

- Always use a clean cutting board.
- Use one cutting board for fresh produce and a separate one for raw meat, poultry, and seafood. Consider color coding the boards: red for beef, green for fruits and veggies, white for dairy, yellow for poultry, blue for cooked foods, and tan/peach for seafood. If there is a sign above where the cutting boards are kept, this will help eliminate the growth of bacteria and cross contamination.
- Once cutting boards become excessively worn or develop hard-to-clean grooves, you should replace them.

Never defrost food at room temperature. Thaw food:

- In the refrigerator.
- In the microwave, but cook the food immediately.

IMPORTANT NOTICE - The information and suggestions presented by Philadelphia Indemnity Insurance Company in this Technical Bulletin are for your consideration in your loss prevention efforts. They are not intended to be complete or definitive in identifying all hazards associated with your business, preventing workplace accidents, or complying with any safety related, or other, laws or regulations. You are encouraged to alter them to fit the specific hazards of your business and to have your legal counsel review all of your plans and company policies.

Food may also be thawed in cold water. Be sure that the sink or container that holds food is clean before submerging food. Two methods may be used when thawing:

- Completely submerge airtight wrapped package. Change water every 30 minutes.
- Completely submerge airtight wrapped food in constantly running cold water.

Refrigerate or cook food immediately after thawed.

Marinades may be used to tenderize or add flavor to food. When using marinades:

- Always marinate food in the refrigerator, not on the counter.
- Use food-grade plastic, stainless steel, or glass containers to marinate food.
- Sauce that is used to marinate raw meat, poultry, fish or seafood should not be used on cooked foods, unless it is boiled before applying.
- Never reuse marinades for other foods.

Discard any leftover batter, or breading, after it has come in contact with raw food.

Prepare stuffing and place in poultry cavity or in pockets of thick sliced meat or poultry just before roasting.

Wash fruits and vegetables with cold water before use. Thick-skinned produce may be scrubbed with a brush. Do not use soap.

Food should not be tasted until it reaches a safe internal temperature. Refer to internal cooking temperature chart on page 14 for the recommended safe temperatures. Use a clean utensil each time you taste food, otherwise you may contaminate the food.

Do not use a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, or seafood unless the plate has first been washed in hot, soapy water.

When You Cook-

Use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature of meat, poultry, casseroles, and other food. Check temperature in several places to be sure the food is evenly heated. Wash the thermometer with hot, soapy water after use.

Several types of thermometers are available, including:

- Oven-safe-insert 2 to 2 1/2 inches deep in the thickest part of the food, at the beginning of the cooking time. It remains there throughout cooking and is not appropriate for thin food.

IMPORTANT NOTICE - The information and suggestions presented by Philadelphia Indemnity Insurance Company in this Technical Bulletin are for your consideration in your loss prevention efforts. They are not intended to be complete or definitive in identifying all hazards associated with your business, preventing workplace accidents, or complying with any safety related, or other, laws or regulations. You are encouraged to alter them to fit the specific hazards of your business and to have your legal counsel review all of your plans and company policies.

- Dial instant-read-not designed to stay in the food during cooking. Insert probe the full length of the sensing area, usually 2 to 2 1/2 inches. If measuring the temperature of a thin food, such as a hamburger patty or boneless chicken breast, insert probe sideways with the sensing device in the center. About 15 to 20 seconds are required for the temperature to be accurately displayed.
- Digital instant-read-not designed to stay in food during cooking. The heat sensing device is in the tip of the probe. Place the tip of the probe in the center of the thickest part of the food, at least 1/2 inch deep. About 10 seconds are required for the temperature to be accurately displayed.

Internal Cooking Temperatures

Product	°F
Egg & Egg Dishes	
Eggs	Cook until yolk & white are firm.
Egg casseroles	160
Egg sauces, custards	160
Ground Meat & Meat Mixtures	
Turkey, Chicken	165
Beef, Veal, Lamb, Pork	160
Fresh Beef, Veal, Lamb	
Medium Rare	145
Medium	160
Well Done	170
Fresh Pork	
Medium	160
Well Done	170
Ham	
Fresh (raw)	160
Fully cooked (to reheat)	140
Roast Beef	
Cooked commercially, vacuum sealed, and ready-	140

IMPORTANT NOTICE - The information and suggestions presented by Philadelphia Indemnity Insurance Company in this Technical Bulletin are for your consideration in your loss prevention efforts. They are not intended to be complete or definitive in identifying all hazards associated with your business, preventing workplace accidents, or complying with any safety related, or other, laws or regulations. You are encouraged to alter them to fit the specific hazards of your business and to have your legal counsel review all of your plans and company policies.

Product	°F
to-eat	
Poultry*	
All products	165
Stuffing	
Cooked alone or in bird	165
Sauces, Soups, Gravies, Marinades	
Used with raw meat, poultry, or fish	Bring to a boil.
Seafood	
Fin Fish	Cook until opaque and flakes easily with a fork.
Shrimp, lobster, crab	Should turn red and flesh should become pearly opaque.
Scallops	Should turn milky white or opaque and firm.
Clams, mussels, oysters	Cook until shells open.
Leftovers	165

Note: These temperatures are recommended for consumer cooking. They are not intended for processing, institutional, or foodservice preparation. Food Service Workers should consult their state or local food code, or health department.

* Safe minimum internal temperature

Never partially cook food for finishing later because you increase the risk of bacterial growth on the food. Bacteria are killed when foods reach a safe internal temperature.

Don't use recipes in which eggs remain raw or only partially cooked. Eggs should be prepared immediately after breaking. When possible, substitute pasteurized eggs for raw eggs in cooked dishes.

When preparing food in the oven, set the oven to at least 325 °F. Cook food to the safe recommended temperature. Check internal temperature in several places with a food thermometer.

If a convection oven is used to prepare food, you may reduce oven temperature 25 °F. Refer to manufacturer's instructions for additional information.



IMPORTANT NOTICE - The information and suggestions presented by Philadelphia Indemnity Insurance Company in this Technical Bulletin are for your consideration in your loss prevention efforts. They are not intended to be complete or definitive in identifying all hazards associated with your business, preventing workplace accidents, or complying with any safety related, or other, laws or regulations. You are encouraged to alter them to fit the specific hazards of your business and to have your legal counsel review all of your plans and company policies.



A microwave oven can be used to prepare food, but care must be taken to make sure food reaches a safe temperature throughout.

- Stir or rotate food midway through the microwaving time to eliminate cold spots, and for more even cooking. Cover food.
- Partial cooking may be done in the microwave only if the food is to finish cooking immediately, either on the range, grill, or in a conventional oven.
- Observe standing times given in recipes so cooking is completed.
- Use a food thermometer or the oven's temperature probe to be sure the food has reached a safe temperature. Check temperature in several places.
- Check manufacturer's instructions.

For information on cooking times for large quantities of food, contact your health department. Check with your local library or bookstore for books on quantity cooking.

“Danger Zone”

Bacteria multiply rapidly between 40 and 140 °F. To keep food out of this "danger zone," keep cold food cold and hot food hot. Keep food cold in the refrigerator, in coolers, or on the service line on ice. Keep hot food in the oven, in heated chafing dishes, or in preheated steam tables, warming trays and/or slow cookers.

Never leave perishable foods, such as meat, poultry, eggs and casseroles in the "danger zone" over 2 hours; 1 hour in temperatures above 90 °F.

When You Chill Food

- Place food in the refrigerator.
- Don't overfill the refrigerator. Cool air must circulate to keep food safe.
- Divide food and place in shallow containers. Slice roast beef or ham and layer in containers in portions for service.
- Divide turkey into smaller portions or slices and refrigerate. Remove stuffing from cavity before refrigeration.
- Place soups or stews in shallow containers. To cool quickly, place in ice water bath and stir.
- Cover and label cooked foods. Include the preparation date on the label.

When You Transport Food

Keep cold food cold. Place cold food in cooler with a cold source such as ice or frozen gel packs. Use plenty of ice or frozen gel packs. Cold food should be held at or below 40 °F.

Hot food should be kept hot, at or above 140 °F. Wrap well and place in an insulated container.

When You Reheat Food

Heat cooked, commercially vacuum-sealed, ready-to-eat foods, such as hams and roasts, to 140 °F.

Foods that have been cooked ahead and cooled should be reheated to at least 165 °F.

Reheat leftovers thoroughly to at least 165 °F. Reheat sauces, soups, and gravies to a boil.

On Stove Top -Place food in pan and heat thoroughly. The food should reach at least 165 °F on a food thermometer when done.

In Oven-Place food in oven set no lower than 325 °F. Use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature of the food.

In Microwave-Stir, cover, and rotate fully cooked food for even heating. Allow standing time. Heat food until it reaches at least 165 °F throughout.

In Slow Cooker, Steam Tables or Chafing Dishes-Not Recommended

Reheating leftovers in slow cookers, steam tables or chafing dishes is not recommended because foods may stay in the "danger zone," between 40 and 140 °F, too long. Bacteria multiply rapidly at these temperatures.

IMPORTANT NOTICE - The information and suggestions presented by Philadelphia Indemnity Insurance Company in this Technical Bulletin are for your consideration in your loss prevention efforts. They are not intended to be complete or definitive in identifying all hazards associated with your business, preventing workplace accidents, or complying with any safety related, or other, laws or regulations. You are encouraged to alter them to fit the specific hazards of your business and to have your legal counsel review all of your plans and company policies.

Once food is cooked or reheated, it should be held hot, at or above 140 °F. Food may be held in oven or on serving line in heated chafing dishes, or on preheated steam tables, warming trays, and/or slow cookers. Always keep hot food hot. Hot holding for extended periods may reduce the quality of the food.

When You Keep Food Cold

Store food in refrigerator at 40 °F or below. If there is not enough room in the refrigerator, place food in coolers with ice, or frozen gel packs. Always keep cold food cold.

When You Serve Food

Use clean containers and utensils to store and serve food.

Do not use a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, or seafood unless the plate has first been washed in hot, soapy water.

When a dish is empty or nearly empty, replace with fresh container of food, removing the previous container.

Keep It Cold

Place cold food in containers on ice. Hold cold foods at or below 40 °F.

Food that will be portioned and served on the serving line should be placed in a shallow container. Place this container inside a deep pan filled partially with ice to keep food cold.

Food like chicken salad and desserts in individual serving dishes can also be placed directly on ice, or in a shallow container set in a deep pan filled with ice. Drain off water as ice melts and replace ice frequently.

Keep It Hot

Once food is thoroughly heated on stovetop, oven or in microwave oven, keep food hot by using a heat source. Place food in chafing dishes, preheated steam tables, warming trays, and/or slow cookers.

Check the temperature frequently to be sure food stays at or above 140 °F.

When You Finish Up

- Discard all perishable foods, such as meat, poultry, eggs and casseroles, left at room temperature longer than 2 hours; 1 hour in air temperatures above 90 °F. Some exceptions to this rule are foods such as cookies, crackers, bread and whole fruit.
- Immediately refrigerate or freeze remaining leftovers in shallow containers.

Reference:

USDA, FSIS Food Safety Education Staff

IMPORTANT NOTICE - The information and suggestions presented by Philadelphia Indemnity Insurance Company in this Technical Bulletin are for your consideration in your loss prevention efforts. They are not intended to be complete or definitive in identifying all hazards associated with your business, preventing workplace accidents, or complying with any safety related, or other, laws or regulations. You are encouraged to alter them to fit the specific hazards of your business and to have your legal counsel review all of your plans and company policies.