

# FOOD SAFETY ESSENTIALS: CRITICAL TEMPERATURE CONTROL

Keeping food at the right temperature is extremely important, particularly when your business or community group is producing and serving food to key workers, volunteers and vulnerable groups.



These key considerations and advice on this important subject will help ensure your products hit the mark on safety, as well as taste!

## WHY TEMPERATURE CONTROL IS IMPORTANT

Certain high-risk foods, particularly those that contain protein (meat, poultry, fish, dairy) as well as ready-to-eat and cooked rice products must be kept out of the danger zone temperatures (3°C – 65°C), which support growth of potentially harmful microorganisms.

Microorganisms are bacteria, viruses, moulds and yeasts etc. and could cause illness. The risk of food poisoning can be reduced if high-risk foods are kept outside the danger zone.

Food poisoning for any individual is extremely unpleasant, but for people who have other medical conditions it could be potentially catastrophic, resulting in hospitalisation or even death.



## HOW TO KEEP FOOD OUTSIDE THE DANGER ZONE



Follow these simple control steps when producing high-risk foods.

**Keep HOT food HOT – store or display high-risk food above 65°C until it is served.**

If the temperature of the food product drops below 65°C, it can be served at that temperature for a single period of up to two hours, reheated to a temperature of 65°C as quickly as possible, or cooled quickly to a suitable temperature (see Cooling Hot Food Quickly below).



**Keep COLD food COLD – store or display high-risk food below 3°C.**

If the temperature of the food rises above 3°C, it can be served at that temperature for one single period of up to four hours. After four hours, the food must be discarded.

## COOL HOT FOOD QUICKLY

**THE GOLDEN RULE is to cook only as much food as you think you will use. The less food you have to cool down, the more effective your cooling process will be!**

**GOLDEN RULE**

If you intend to serve hot food at a later date/time (for example, more than two hours after it has been cooked) and you have no means of keeping the food hot (above 65°C), then ensure that you cool all high-risk foods as quickly and as safely as possible. Cool any hot food from 65°C to 10°C within a maximum two-hour period.

There are many options available to cool food quickly and safely. These include:

- > Using a blast chiller (a special refrigerator that is capable of rapidly cooling foods), although such appliances are typically expensive to purchase.
- > Dividing the hot foods into smaller, or shallower, portions to speed up the cooling process.
- > Rinsing the food products under cold running drinking water (e.g. for rice, pasta and vegetables), ensuring the sink has been cleaned and disinfected before use.

**NOTE:** Consider the safety of individuals when handling large quantities or volumes of hot food. If possible, keep movement of such products to an absolute minimum to lower the risk of splashes and spillages of hot food which may cause burns and scalds.

## WHAT TO PLAN

Carefully plan what you intend to do and who you intend to serve. Consider if you have the appropriate equipment, facilities and knowledge to safely implement your plans and have minimised the risk of food-poisoning microorganisms from multiplying in the food you are serving. Consider avoiding certain food types such as smoked fish, cooked shellfish, pates, cured meats and unpasteurised cheeses if you are serving food to vulnerable groups.

### ADVISE

If serving food that is intended to be heated, advise those receiving the food to thoroughly reheat the food until the core of the product is piping hot (visible at the core of the product), or if they have a thermometer that the core temperature reaches 72°C for at least 2 minutes. It is also advised to encourage immediate consumption (within 24 hours) of the food and to clearly outline how the food should be stored when delivered.

### RECORD

Keep written records of storage, cooking and cooling times and temperatures so that you can evidence that you have controlled the hazards at every stage of your operations.



We are **here**. We are **helping**. We are **innovating**.

**NSF is here to help!** If you have any questions or require further assistance, please get in touch.

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