

Safe Food Handling Guidelines



To avoid food borne illnesses, it is essential that both raw and cooked foods are handled properly. The majority of food borne illnesses can be traced to one or more of the following:

- Food that has been prepared and held at improper temperatures too long
- Food that is not cooked properly
- Poor refrigeration
- Poor personal hygiene
- Cross-contamination between raw and cooked foods

Potentially Hazardous Foods include all high-protein foods such as poultry, milk and milk products, gravy, fish and shellfish.

Temperature Danger Zone

Food should be stored below 40 degrees, or heated and held above 140 degrees. The range between 40 degrees and 140 degrees is called the *Danger Zone*. Potentially Hazardous Foods must not be held in the Danger Zone for longer than 4 hours total (including transportation, preparation, packaging and storage).

Refrigeration

It is essential to keep your refrigerator temperature between 34 and 38 degrees to ensure all items stored there are kept below 40 degrees. This temperature range will ensure the freshness of your food items.

Freezing

It is essential that you keep your freezer temperature below 0 degrees at all times to ensure all frozen foods are frozen solid.

Thawing

NEVER thaw food (other than frozen bread) on your countertop. Ideally, thaw frozen food in your refrigerator overnight. If that is not possible, you may thaw frozen food in your microwave oven, provided that it is reheated, served and eaten immediately. NEVER thaw frozen food in the microwave and then store in the refrigerator.

For best tasting results, move your dinner from the freezer to the refrigerator the night before, or the morning before you plan to serve it.

Reheating

Your meals have been properly cooked, then properly cooled, packaged and frozen for your later enjoyment. For best results, follow the reheating instructions provided for the specific meals.

If you have any leftovers, DO NOT refrigerate and reheat again. To ensure food safety, dispose of all leftovers that have been thawed and reheated.