

FOOD TEMPERATURE MEASUREMENT RESOURCE GUIDE



Background

Maintaining foods that need time/temperature control for safety, known as TCS foods, at the proper temperature can reduce the risk of foodborne illness. The temperature of these foods in the store should be monitored throughout the day to ensure foods are held at the correct temperature, and hot and cold holding equipment is functioning properly.

Responsibilities

Person in Charge in the Store: The person in charge in the store is responsible for providing employees access to thermometers, and for training and monitoring on proper food temperature measurement.

Store Personnel: Employees are responsible for properly measuring and recording product temperatures, reporting non-functional/damaged thermometers to the person in charge, and calibrating thermometers.

How to Prep

Training resources and the necessary equipment and supplies should be available when the store is in operation. This includes a functional and calibrated food thermometer, along with a method to sanitize the thermometer probe before and after product contact.

Below are examples of food thermometers:

- **Thermocouples and Thermistors**
 - Measure temperature through a metal probe
 - Display temperatures digitally
 - Have a sensing area on the tip of their probes
- **Digital Stemmed Thermometers**
 - Measure temperature through a digital stem
 - Have a sensing area from the tip to the dimple
 - The entire sensing area should be inserted into the food
 - If needed, have a calibration tool to adjust the thermometer to make it accurate

Digital thermocouples and stems with penetration probes are the most common thermometers used in food service establishments

Procedure

Make sure thermometers used to measure the temperature of food are calibrated and accurate to within +/- 2°F (1°C).

- Clean and sanitize the probe between each use.
- Uncover the food to be measured.
- Insert the thermometer probe sensing area into the middle of the thickest part of the product.
- Read and record the temperature.
- If the temperature is not within the required temperature range for the product, implement corrective actions and record the actions taken.

A sampling of food temperatures for final cooking, cold holding, hot holding, and cooling should be measured and recorded two times per day (three times for a food service establishment open 24 hours a day). A sampling of delivered product temperatures should be measured upon receipt at the establishment.

Additional Information

When taking the temperature of thin foods, which is defined by the FDA 2017 Food Code as “those having a thickness less than 13 mm (1/2 inch)” it is necessary to use a thin tip probe thermometer that is designed for that purpose.

References

U.S. FDA 2017 Food Code

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