



## GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR FOODSERVICE

\*This guide is for quick reference only\*

### Temperatures

- Potentially hazardous foods being held hot must be held at 135° F or more. If held cold, they must be held at 45° F or less (best practice for cold holding is 41° F or less and it will be required in 2019).
- The range between 45° F and 135° F is considered the “DANGER ZONE” because bacteria can grow rapidly within this range.
- Whole beef and pork, fish and eggs must be cooked to an internal temperature of 145° F.
- Ground meats must be cooked to an internal temperature of 155° F.
- Poultry (chicken, turkey, duck, etc.), stuffed meats and stuffing containing meat must be cooked to an internal temperature of 165° F.
- Previously cooked (leftovers), potentially hazardous foods must be reheated to an internal temperature of 165° F within 2 hours.
- A metal stem-type thermometer with a temperature range of 0° F to 220° F must be available to check the temperatures of hot and cold foods. The thermometer should be calibrated in ice water to 32° F at least weekly.
- All cold or hot holding units must have a thermometer.
- Thermometers must be placed in the warmest / coldest part of the unit.

### Food handling Procedures

- Frozen foods must be thawed in the refrigerator, under cool running water (70° F or less), in the microwave or as a part of the cooking process. Frozen foods must **never** be left out at room temperature or in standing water to thaw.
- All foods must be kept under cover except during necessary periods of cooling, preparation and serving. Uncovered or unwrapped foods on display must be protected by a sneeze guard.
- Raw meats must be stored below cooked foods, produce or ready to eat food items in the refrigerator.
- Food items must be stored on shelves at least 6 inches above the floor and be protected from splash, dust or other sources of contamination
- Avoid cross contamination between foods.



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- Prepare raw and cooked foods in separate areas. If this is not possible in your establishment, always wash, rinse and sanitize the prep area before and after preparing raw items and before preparing cooked items.
- Prepare potentially hazardous foods in small batches to avoid temperature abuse.
- Place each batch in coolers or other temperature holding equipment as quickly as possible.
- Cool cooked food rapidly using the 2-stage method. Once it has reached 135° F, potentially hazardous food must be actively cooled to 70° F within 2 hours. Then, cooled from 70° F to 45° F or below within 4 more hours. Six hours total cooling time.
- Use proper methods to cool (shallow pans, ice baths, ice paddles, stirring).
- Ice used in beverages or in connection with the chilling or serving of salads or vegetables is considered a food product and must be stored and handled in a sanitary manner.
- Ice must be dispensed using a scoop with a handle, it must not be scooped out with a cup.
- All ice storage bins must be covered and protected from contamination and should be cleaned at a frequency to keep black and pink slime from building up.
- Clean, tightly covered, food-grade containers should be used for food storage.
- Date labeling is required for all cooked, potentially hazardous foods kept for more than 24 hours. Date and time labeling is recommended for foods that are cooling.

### Personal Hygiene

- All employees must practice good personal hygiene such as wearing clean clothing and some type of hair restraint.
- Hand, fingernails and hair must be kept clean.
- Food handlers may not wear nail polish or artificial nails when working with food, unless wearing intact gloves.
- Except for a plain ring such as a wedding band, food employees may not wear jewelry on their hands and arms while preparing food.
- Bare hand contact with ready to eat foods is **not** allowed. Alternate methods such as gloves, tongs or deli paper must be used.
- No form of tobacco may be used in the kitchen area.
- Hands must be washed before beginning work, after each visit to the restroom, before putting on gloves, and as often as necessary to remove soil and contamination.
- Each hand sink must be supplied with soap and an approved hand-drying device at all times.



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- Hand washing sinks are for **hand washing only**. They may not be used for utensil washing, food preparation or utility purposes.
- Hand washing sinks may not be used as a storage shelf for boxes, dirty pans, etc.
- Access to the hand sink must never be blocked.
- Food prep and dishwashing sinks are **not** to be used for hand washing.

### **Cleaning, Sanitizing and Storage of Equipment and Utensils**

- All equipment and utensils must be kept clean and in good repair. Equipment and utensils that are rusted, cracked, melted, broken or no longer smooth and easily cleanable should not be used.
- Multi-use utensils must be washed rinsed and sanitized between uses. This can be accomplished by hand using a 3-compartment sink, a mechanical dish machine, or any combination of the two.
- Approved methods of sanitizing include immersion for at least 30 seconds in a chemical sanitizing solution or in clean, hot water of at least 171° F.
- Chemical sanitizing can be accomplished with 50 ppm chlorine, 12.5 ppm iodine or 150 ppm quaternary ammonium. Sanitizing may also be accomplished in a commercial dish machine with a chemical sanitizing cycle or a final rinse temperature of 180° F.
- Food prep counters and other food contact surfaces such as cutting boards, slicers, etc. must also be sanitized.
- Sanitizing can only take place after the surface has been thoroughly cleaned.
- Sanitizing can be accomplished by spraying with sanitizing solution and wiping with a clean cloth or by wiping with a clean cloth that has been in a sanitizing solution. The strength of the sanitizing solution should be the same as above.
- Working containers of chemicals must be labeled with the common name (such as **sanitizer** on a bottle of sanitizer solution or a bowl with wiping cloths).
- Sanitizer test strips must be available, convenient and regularly used to test chemical sanitizers to insure minimum strengths.
- Dishes must be completely air-dried or they can be used after they have drained.
- Clean dishes must be stored in a clean, dry location at least 6 inches above the floor where they are not exposed to splash, dust or other sources of contamination and they must be covered or turned over.
- In use utensils must be stored on a clean, protected surface, in the food with the handle extending above the food, in running water of sufficient velocity to flush particulates to the drain or in a container of water at least 135° F.
- Single use items shall be handled, displayed and dispensed so that contamination is prevented.



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### Storage and Refuse

- Floors, walls and ceilings must be kept clean and in good repair.
- Storage areas must be kept clean.
- All storage must be at least 6 inches above the floor or otherwise arranged to permit cleaning.
- When food is removed from its original packaging and it cannot be readily and unmistakably recognized, such as dry pasta, then the container must be labeled with the common name of the food.
- Chemicals must be stored away from food items.
- Pesticides must be approved for food service and stored away from food.
- Dumpsters and enclosures must be kept reasonably clean and in good repair.
- The dumpster drain hole must be plugged and the lids must be kept closed.
- The mop sink area must be kept clean and the mops hung to air-dry without soiling walls, equipment or supplies.

For more information, you can view and download the North Carolina Food Code Manual here:

<http://ehs.ncpublichealth.com/faf/docs/foodprot/NC-FoodCodeManual-2009-FINAL.pdf>



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