

A Guide to Using a Food Thermometer For Campus Food Events



Why do we have to check food temperatures? --- At certain temperatures microbes (bacteria, viruses) can grow in food and cause disease so we want to avoid eating foods that are in these hazardous temperature ranges. Also, the Suffolk County Department of Health Services requires that food temperatures be taken.



1. Measure temperature of foods initially and every 30 minutes up to 2 hours. After 2 hours, food should no longer be served unless it can be replaced with fresh food.
2. Use a clean, sanitized thermometer when measuring food temperature. To initially clean thermometer use hot water and soap, and then sanitize by wiping with an alcohol pad (let thermometer dry). In between testing different foods the thermometer must be rinsed with hot water and wiped with an alcohol pad.
3. Insert thermometer into the center of the food. **Hot foods must be at 140°F or above and cold foods must be at 40°F or below.** Use the following table to determine appropriate actions:

| Hot Foods | Action | Cold Foods | Action |
|----------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|--|
| 140°F or above | Food acceptable to eat; check temperature every 30 minutes | 40°F or below | Food acceptable to eat; check temperature every 30 minutes |
| 120-139°F (Warning Zone) | Reheat food within an hour: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use stove or oven to reheat to 165°F or ○ Use microwave to reheat to 190°F | 41-55°F (Warning Zone) | Cool food in refrigerator until temperature is 40°F or below |
| Less than 120°F (Danger Zone) | Discard food | More than 55°F (Danger Zone) | Discard food |

- If the food was delivered from a restaurant with warning zone or danger zone temperatures, do not accept the food.
 - Do not use sternos and chafing dishes to reheat food; they are only designed to maintain proper temperatures, not reheat foods.
4. Record food temperatures on EH&S' *Food Temperature Recording Chart* (available from EH&S' website at www.ehs.sunysb.edu or by calling EH&S at 2-6410). Provide completed chart to EH&S (z=6200, Fax 2-9683) within 5 days after the event.