

**Controlling Food Temperatures**

Controlling food temperatures is one of the most important things that must be done in a food business. You must ensure that food is cooked, cooled, chilled and reheated properly to minimise the risk of harmful levels of bacteria in the food that you sell.

Remember that meat isn't the only high risk food. Dried goods such as rice and pulses and vegetable and salads may contain bacteria that may grow if bad temperature control is practiced.

**Always remember that perishable food should be kept out of the danger zone of 8°C-63°C to prevent the growth of harmful bacteria.**

**Cooking and Reheating**

In raw foods, such as meat, fruit and vegetables, there may be high levels of bacteria present due to contamination from soil or from processing in an abattoir. Bacteria are killed at high temperatures so it is important that food is cooked thoroughly to a core temperature of at least **75°C for at least two minutes**.

One way to check whether the food has been cooked thoroughly would be to use a **probe thermometer**.

It is recommended that high risk foods requiring cooking through to the centre should be probed on an occasional basis where standard recipes and quantities are used. For new or changed recipes it is suggested that initially one item from each batch is probed.

In all cases however, you must take care that probe thermometers do not contaminate or taint the food being probed. Make sure that probes are kept clean and disinfected before use with ready to eat food, otherwise the probed food must be discarded. Where antibacterial wipes are used, these must be suitable for use with food.

It is also recommended that you keep a record of checks that you make. It is good practice to check and record at least two or three high risk food temperatures per day.

**Chilling**

Chilling food does not kill bacteria, but it does stop it from growing to harmful levels.

It is a legal requirement that perishable foods should be kept refrigerated at 8°C or below. Frozen food should ideally be keep at a temperature at or below -18°C.

It is good practice to check and record fridge and freezer temperatures at least once per day. If a fridge or freezer cannot keep food below 8°C, it must be serviced or replaced.

**Cooling**

The law state that foods must be cooled as quickly as possible.

Methods such as reducing portion size, spreading food on an open tray or using ice can help to cool food quickly before it is refrigerated.

You should aim to cool foods to below 8°C within 90 minutes.

**Hot Holding**

If food is to be held hot, it must be cooked to at least 75°C for two minutes and then held at a temperature at or above 63°C. This is a legal requirement and it is good practice to check that foods are at or above 63°C on a regular basis.