July 2022

Bite-Sized Food Safety

Food safety resources for front-line managers to train food workers

Cool It!

ASK: How cold should foods requiring temperature control for food safety (TCS) be?

ANSWER: 41°F (5°C) or below.

ASK: How quickly should cooked TCS foods be cooled to 41°F or below?

ANSWER: Within 2 hours to 70°F and then within an additional 4 hours (6 hours total) to 41°F. Start timing when the food drops below 135°F.

ASK: Will food cool faster in deep or shallow pans?

ANSWER: In shallow pans with the food 4" or less deep.

ASK: Will food cool faster covered or uncovered?

ANSWER: Uncovered. Cover the food after it has cooled.

ASK: Will food cool faster in plastic or metal pans?

ANSWER: Metal pans. Metal conducts heat. Plastic is an insulator.

ASK: Where in the refrigerator should cooked foods that are cooling be stored?

ANSWER: On the top shelf arranged so that there is lots of air flow around them. Stacking multiple pans together will slow the cooling process.

ASK: Will stirring the food reduce the cooling time?

ANSWER: Yes, stirring moves food in the middle of the pan where it cools slowest to the edges of the pan where it cools fastest.

ASK: To determine if a food has cooled sufficiently, where should you measure the temperature?

ANSWER: In the center or in the thickest part.

ASK: How do you know if a food is cooling quickly enough?

ANSWER: Measure the food temperature with a probe thermometer several times during cooling.

ASK: What should you do if a food is not cooling fast enough?

ANSWER: Divide the food into smaller portions and reduce the depth of the food in each pan, put the container with the food being cooled in an ice bath, and/or stir the food with an ice wand. Use a blast chiller if you have one. Discard the food if you can't cool it quickly enough.

CLOSING THOUGHT: ***Proper cooling prevents the growth of bacteria that can cause foodborne illness. Let's keep our customers safe and healthy!***