



Food Safety News

Winter 2015-2016

Play it Cool and Don't Be a Statistic By Brittany Schoetzow

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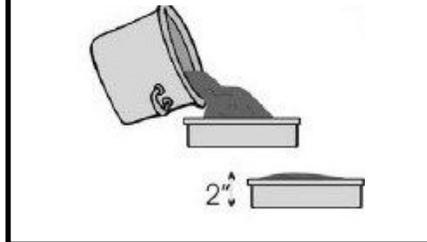
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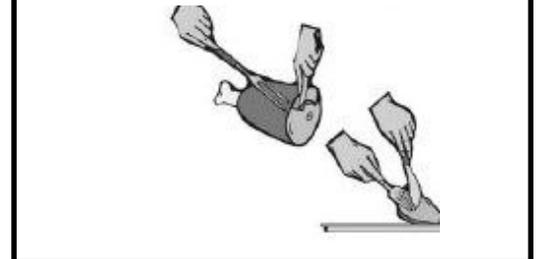
IMPORTANT REMINDER: Don't forget that your food service license expires on Thursday, March 31, 2016. Look for your license renewal form to arrive via mail in mid February. Renewals not received by 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 31, 2016 or postmarked before Friday, April 1, 2016 will be assessed a late fee equal to an additional two (2) times the original license fee. For example, a license that costs \$200.00 would then be \$600.00 when the late fee is assessed. Save yourself some money by being on time!!

Improper cooling of potentially hazardous food can increase pathogen growth and therefore lead to foodborne illnesses. According to Title 410 IAC 7-24 "The Retail Food Establishment Sanitation Requirements (also known as The Food Code), section 189, explains that potentially hazardous foods should be cooled rapidly from: 135°F to 70°F in 2 hours or less and then from 70°F to 41°F in 4 hours or less with a total of 6 hours to cool (Brown et al, 2012). According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Indiana Food Code section 190, the methods of cooling are as follows:

1) Place food in shallow pans and refrigerate at 41°F or less



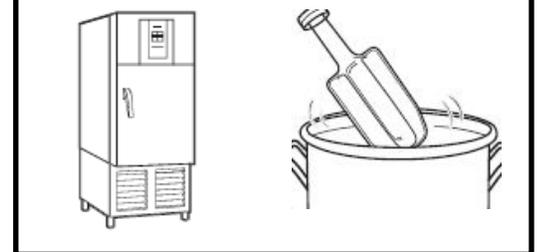
2) Separate food into smaller portions and refrigerate at 41°F or less.



3) Place the container of food into an ice bath water and stir frequently.



4) Use a rapid cooling equipment like ice paddles or blast chillers.



5) Add ice as an ingredient.



6) Heat transfer through food containers by process of ventilation when in cooling process.



<Continued on page 2>

***** WE APPRECIATE YOUR PATIENCE!!!** Please be aware that, if you visit our office in person to pay for your license renewal in cash you may experience a longer than normal wait to process your license as we have a new computer system due for implementation in mid-March. Thank you in advance for your patience and understanding!!! ***

These methods have been established to keep food out of the danger zone for long periods of time and prevent foodborne illnesses. ¹According to Brown and his colleagues, many restaurants are not meeting FDA requirements regarding cooling procedures. After interviewing 420 restaurant managers, the data on *Table 1* was collected from their responses.

The data presented suggests that many of the restaurant managers and employees do not fully understand the proper procedure for cooling food. Elkhart County does not want to be a statistic. The presented procedures demonstrate a good outline for starting on the path to safe cooling techniques. Properly establishing a cooling method with an accurate protocol for monitoring will decrease chances for foodborne illnesses. So let's play it cool, Elkhart County!



¹ Brown et al. 2012. Restaurant Food Cooling Practices. *Journal of Food Protection* 75:2172-2178

Table 1:

<i>1. Did 'kitchen manager food safety training' cover proper cooling?</i>		
	Yes	97%
	No	2%
<i>2. Did 'food worker food safety training' cover proper cooling?</i>		
	Yes	91%
	No	7%
<i>3. Does the restaurant have formal cooling procedure?</i>		
	Yes	86%
	No	14%
<i>4. Is the cooling process written down in the restaurant?</i>		
	Yes	34%
	No	64%
<i>5. Have the food workers been trained on cooling processes?</i>		
	Yes	89%
	No	10%
<i>6. Has the cooling processes in your restaurant been tested and verified?</i>		
	Yes	61%
	No	35%
<i>7. Is the time or temperature monitored during cooling processes?</i>		
	Yes	60%
	No	40%
<i>8. Are the cooling time or temperature measures recorded?</i>		
	Yes	26%
	No	73%
* All percentages have been rounded up.		
** Left over percentages were "unsure".		

Using Food Grade Containers for Food Storage by Kate Fisher

In the retail food business there is often a need to store large quantities of food in walk in coolers or freezers. Large five gallon buckets from retail stores are items that are commonly used to store food but some of these are not necessarily approved for use in food service facilities. There are risks associated with using non-food grade containers.

Food needs to be stored in food grade containers that are designed so food cannot spill, or leak. Containers should also be durable and be able to be sealed or covered by a lid. According to the *Retail Food Establishment Sanitation Requirements Title 410 IAC 7-24*, also known as the State Food Code, *Section 205* outlines the requirements that make a container safe for use in a food facility. The container must be safe, durable, corrosion-resistant, non-absorbent, easily cleanable, resistant to wear, and cannot impart colors, odors, or tastes to food. Plastic containers that are labeled with a cup and fork symbol are safe to use for storing food. If the container doesn't have the cup and fork symbol consult the manufacture's label or contact the manufacture themselves. Food grade containers have "food safe" or "food grade" on the label.

Using non-food grade containers may contaminate the food. For example, the non-food grade material may be imparted with scents or insect repellents. Food that is stored in these containers may absorb the chemicals from the non-food grade container. Containers that had previously held chemicals should never be used to store food. Here are a few examples of containers that are not food grade and are not to be used in a food service facility for food storage: garbage cans, mop buckets, five-gallon utility buckets from home centers such as Menards or Lowes, laundry detergent buckets, garbage bags, grocery bags and any container that has been previously used to store non-food items such as chemicals, soap, paint or detergent.



If food needs to be held at a certain temperatures the material of the storage container should also be taken into account. Stainless steel containers are much better at conducting hot and cold temperatures than a thick plastic.

If there are any questions about whether a container is food grade or not, it's better to error on the side of caution and not use it!

We've all seen it. A customer has picked up too many ketchup packets or the waitress has given the table too many rolls of bread. Can they be re-served? It depends. Here are some guidelines to help you distinguish the difference between what you can and cannot re-serve to customers and why.

What you can re-serve:

Food items that are pre-packaged, non-potentially hazardous foods may be returned and re-served, according to Retail Food Establishment Sanitization Requirement Title 410 IAC 7-24 (aka State Food Code), section 201. Food items that qualify, but are not limited to, are unopened ketchup/mustard/mayo packets, dipping sauces, crackers, fruit cups and jelly packets. The foods that qualify have to be unopened in its original packaging and maintained in good condition. Other foods that qualify to be re-served are bottles of ketchup or steak sauce. This is because the food is dispensed in container with a narrow neck and is closed in between uses.

What you cannot re-serve:

Foods that are not pre-packaged, such as bread rolls, apples and plate garnishes may not be re-served, even if they are non-potentially hazardous. Food from uneaten family style dishes, regardless of whether or not they are potentially hazardous, may not be re-served. Open food items have the potential to be contaminated by the previous customer, not only from coughing and sneezing but also from unintentional and intentional contamination. Any food items that are potentially hazardous cannot be re-served such as milk cartons, Even if the food service operator does a great job at keeping it temperature controlled, there is still a chance that the foods were temperature abused which make it a breeding ground for bacteria.

So when wondering if I can re-serve that, ask yourself, is it:

Unopened non-hazardous foods? = Yes

Opened and/or Unopened hazardous foods? = No

Opened non-hazardous foods? = No



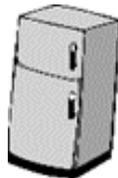
The bottom line is the little amount of money you save by re-serving food you shouldn't is minuscule to the cost of a foodborne outbreak at your facility. By having this knowledge on which foods you can re-serve, you can help minimize the chances of someone getting sick.

Thawing Foods Properly By Tamra Masterson

Thawing foods is a critical point at which, if done incorrectly, allows pathogens that can cause foodborne illness to grow. Freezing foods does not kill microorganisms. Food can never be thawed at room temperature. If thawed at room temperature, any microorganisms present can start to grow to dangerous levels. When a frozen food is thawed in the temperature danger zone (42°F to 134°F) any foodborne microorganisms present will begin to grow.

Here are four acceptable, easy ways to thaw potentially hazardous foods. These methods can be found in the Retail Food Establishment Sanitation Requirements Title 410 IAC 7-24, section 199 set forth by The Indiana State Department of Health:

1.) If you do not need the food immediately and have some time before it is to be cooked or prepared, place it in the refrigerator at 41° F or lower and the food will thaw slowly while never reaching the temperature danger zone.



2.) Place the food in a container that will allow it to be completely submerged in water **and** place it under running water that is 70°F or below in an approved food preparation sink. The water flow must be strong enough to flush loose particles out. Be sure to place the food in the cooler or cook it as soon as it is thawed.



3.) The frozen food may be thawed in the microwave, but only use this method if you plan to cook the food immediately after thawing in the microwave with no interruption in the cooking process.



4.) Lastly, the food can be thawed as part of, or during the cooking process. The food must meet the minimum required internal cooking temperature prior to service.

Any of the thawing methods stated above when used with time and temperature control will help you avoid foodborne illness!



Food safety is important for everyone—but it's especially important for older adults. As people age, it is normal for their bodies not to work as well as they did when they were younger. Changes in organs and body systems are expected with aging. These changes often make people more susceptible to contracting foodborne illnesses or food poisoning. For example, the stomach and intestinal tract may hold onto foods for a longer period of time; the liver and kidneys may not readily rid the body of toxins; and the sense of taste or smell may be altered.

By the age of 65, many individuals have been diagnosed with one or more chronic conditions, such as diabetes, arthritis, cancer, or cardiovascular disease, and take at least one medication. The side effects of some medications or the chronic disease process may weaken the immune system, causing older adults to be more susceptible to contracting a foodborne illness.

After the age of 75 years many adults often have weakened immune systems and are at an increased risk for contracting a foodborne illness. As people age, the immune system and other organs in their bodies become sluggish in recognizing and ridding the body of harmful bacteria and other pathogens that cause infection. This is more likely to cause a lengthier illness, sometimes requiring them to undergo hospitalization, or even die.

Foodservice providers need to make safe food handling a commitment to minimize the risk of foodborne illness. Be aware that as people age, their immunity to infection is naturally weakened. Food Time and Temperature Controls, Employee Health Policies, and Menu Advisories for raw, or undercooked foods will aid in this commitment.

This information was obtained from: <http://www.fda.gov/Food/FoodborneIllnessContaminants/PeopleAtRisk/ucm312705.htm>
Please visit this site for further information on this subject.

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Food Safety News is published annually for the retail food service establishments of Elkhart County. It is prepared by the Elkhart County Health Department—Environmental Health Division-Food Program Staff, Karla Kreczmer, Division Manager and Mike Hoover, Food Program Supervisor.

www.elkhartcountyhealth.org

Elkhart County Health Department
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