Food for Thought

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Cooling Reminders

- **Keep cooling foods out of the *Danger Zone*.**
- **Cool foods rapidly.**
- **135°F to 70°F in 2 hours**
- **70°F to 41°F in 4 hours**
- **No more than 6 hours**
- **Use refrigerators *and* freezers.**
- **Take temperatures of cooling foods - keep a log.**

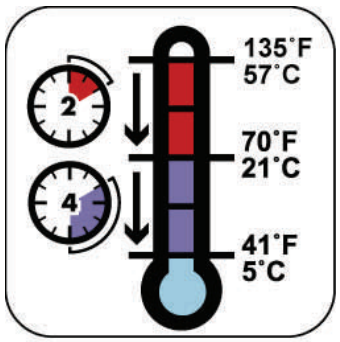
Methods of Cooling

- **Divide cooling foods into smaller portions.**
- **Use shallow containers.**
- **Use metal containers.**
- **Place food containers in ice baths.**

Be Cool about Cooling

Sometimes it is necessary to prepare foods in advance and store them for later use. This requires cooling! Because cooling from 'hot' to 'cold' takes the food through the *Danger Zone* (135°F - 41°F), certain steps must be followed in order to prevent food-borne bacteria from growing during the cooling process. Leaving the hot food on the counter for a couple of hours or placing it immediately in a refrigerator may only lead to bacterial growth which can lead to your customers getting sick.

There are time and temperature requirements to ensure that foods are cooled quickly. Cooling can start on the countertop, but once the food reaches 135°F, the 'cooling clock' begins! Foods must be cooled from 135°F to 70°F within 2 hours and from 70°F to 41°F within an additional 4 hours, for a total of 6 hours.



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There are many reasons that food does not cool quickly:

* Size of the food portion- a large amount of food will take longer to cool than a small amount.
* Food density - a pan of lasagna will take longer to cool than a container of broth.
* Container the food is cooled in - a deep pan of food will take longer to cool than a shallow pan.

These are some of the steps that may be taken to speed up the cooling process:

⇒ Separate the food to be cooled into smaller or thinner portions;

⇒ Place the food to be cooled in shallow pans;

⇒ Use metal storage containers when possible; they transfer heat more rapidly;

⇒ Place the food container in an ice bath; stir foods regularly to reduce heat;

⇒ Add ice as an ingredient to the cooked food; or

⇒ A combination of the above methods.

The most important thing to remember about cooling food is that it must reach 41°F as quickly as possible. This means using a food thermometer to take temperatures of the food regularly as it cools and taking steps to speed up the process if it is not cooling quickly enough. It is recommended that a cooling log be kept to track the temperatures over the two-hour and four-hour cooling periods. (Next page)

Food for Thought is Available by Email

If you would like to receive the quarterly newsletter by email, please send a request to *HDfoodsafety@fairfaxcounty.gov*. Please put "Email List" in the subject line and include the name of your food establishment along with the email address.

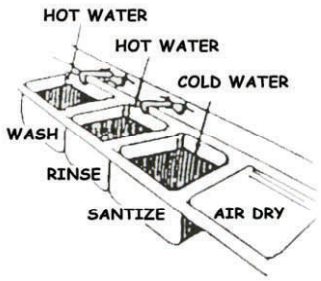
Cooling in an ice bath

For more information about proper cooling, visit the Health Department website at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd/food, contact the Health Department at 703-246-2444 or speak directly to your area inspector.

Wash, Rinse & Sanitize!

One of the most important things to do to prevent the spread of foodborne illness is to wash, rinse and sanitize food-contact equipment, utensils and preparation surfaces regularly. This requires a three-compartment sink. Each compartment (or sink) has a purpose. The *wash sink* is used to hold the soap solution and hot water and to clean the dirt and particles left after being used. The *rinse sink* is always the middle sink - filled with clean hot water. Washed utensils are sanitized in the *sanitize sink*. Washing removes dirt and grime. Sanitizing is necessary to reduce the number of germs on the surfaces that were washed. The water in the sanitizing sink does not need to be hot. The final step to the wash process is *air drying*. Hand-drying increases the risk of re-contaminating the cleaned utensils. It is best to let them air dry completely before storing on the shelves.

The two chemicals often used in restaurants for making sanitizing solutions are chlorine (bleach) and quaternary ammonia. These chemicals must be used in specific amounts and never mixed. A test kit is required to test correctly for the chemical being used. A chlorine sanitizing solution must be between 50 and 100 part per million (ppm). Quat has a range of acceptable concentrations. Use according to the manufacturer's recommendations.



Sanitizer solution is not only used at the three-compartment sink. The sanitize sink should be set up every morning as part of opening for business and a sanitizer *bucket* should be prepared and placed in the food prep area. All surfaces which come in contact with food, such as cutting boards and prep tables should be regularly wiped down with sanitizer solution to kill germs and prevent cross-contamination. If you have questions about this process, talk to your area inspector for more details about setting up the three-compartment sink and sanitizer buckets.

Let the Health Department Know

If a restaurant adds new equipment, changes its menu or business hours, or plans to change owners, the Health Department must be notified, in advance. All new equipment must be approved by the Health Department. Inspections are required for a change of ownership. For more information, call 703-246-2444 or visit our webpage at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd/food.

Kitchen Corner Quiz

True or **False** (answers below)

1. Proper cooling must be completed within 6 hours.
2. The first time limit in cooling is 4 hours to get to 70°F.
3. Using small, thin portions, shallow containers and ice baths are some methods of speeding up the cooling process.
4. The second time limit in cooling is to get from 70°F to 41°F in 4 hours.
5. Leaving food on the counter overnight is a good method of cooling.
6. There are four steps to the cleaning process - wash, rinse, sanitize and air dry.
7. It is a good idea to mix quat and chlorine sanitizer chemicals to get better results.
8. It is safe to use more quat sanitizer than what the manufacturer recommends.
9. Sanitizing reduces the germs on food-contact surfaces.
10. It is a good idea to keep a sanitizer bucket in the food prep area.

Answers: 1 T; 2 F; 3 T; 4 T; 5 F; 6 T; 7 F; 8 F; 9 T; 10 T

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