FN618 (Reviewed Oct. 2026)

Keep Food Safe in Temporary Food Stands



Safe food handling is important, especially when serving food to the public at temporary food stands.

A temporary food service establishment is defined as a food service establishment that operates at a fixed location for a period of time not more that 14 consecutive days in conjunction with a single event or celebration.

Food prepared and offered for sale must be safe for the consumer. Food prepared in a home kitchen should not be used or served at a food stand. Use caution when preparing and serving potentially hazardous foods such as these:

- Meat and poultry
- Milk and egg products
- Pastries made with cream or custard fillings
- Salads and sandwiches made with meat
- Poultry, eggs or fish

Local health department regulations may prohibit the sale of some or all potentially hazardous foods. Commercially prepared potentially hazardous foods that are packaged in individual servings may be served.

Keep Food Safe

Don't let foodborne illness from improperly handled food spoil your next event. The usual symptoms of foodborne illnesses are similar to the flu: nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and/or fever. To vulnerable populations such as children, pregnant women and the elderly, foodborne illness can be life-threatening.

Factors that contribute to foodborne illness are the following:

- Improper cooling of foods
- 12 or more hours between preparation and sale of the food item
- People who are ill or infected handling foods
- Improper holding of hot foods, temperature below 140 degrees Fahrenheit
- Contaminated raw food or ingredients
- Cross-contamination from raw to cooked foods
- Improper cleaning of equipment and utensils
- Inadequate cooking

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When preparing food for an event, remember that uninvited guests called bacteria are ready to strike!

Follow the U.S. Department of Agriculture's four steps to food safety and FIGHT BAC!



1. CLEAN - Wash hands and surfaces that come into contact with food. Follow cleaning with sanitizing to reduce the number of germs on a surface. Wipe or spray surfaces with a solution of 1 tablespoon of bleach per gallon of water; allow to air dry.

2. SEPARATE - Don't cross-contaminate. Separate raw meat from other foods. Use clean cutting boards, containers and utensils.

3. COOK - Measure temperatures. Use a clean, calibrated thermometer and place cold foods on ice at or below 40 degrees Fahrenheit. Keep hot foods at or above 140 degrees.

4. CHILL - Refrigerate or freeze food quickly. Divide large amounts of leftovers into small, shallow containers for quick cooling.

The operator is responsible for monitoring temperatures.

Keep cold food cold and hot food hot.

Frequently monitor time and temperature of potentially hazardous foods. Bacteria multiply rapidly in the temperature danger zone (between 41 and 140 degrees Fahrenheit).

Cook to Safe Internal Temperatures

The following table shows the temperature recommendations from the USDA and Food and Drug Administration. USDA temperature recommendations commonly are used in consumer handouts. Food service establishments commonly use FDA temperature recommendations. Health inspectors use FDA guidelines in their inspections of food service establishments.

Item	USDA Temperatures (in degrees Fahrenheit)	FDA Temperatures (in degrees Fahrenheit)*
Whole poultry, thighs, wings	165	165
Chicken breasts	165	165
Ground turkey/chicken	165	165
Beef, pork, lamb and veal steaks and roasts	145 (medium rare)** 160 (medium)	145
Ground beef, pork, veal, fish, lamb and other ground meats	160	155
Egg dishes	160	155
Soups, stews, stuffing and casseroles	165	165
Stuffed meat, poultry, fish and pasta	165	165
Leftovers	165	165
Ham, precooked	140	140
Ham, fresh (raw)	145**	145
Fish, shellfish	145	145
Fruits and vegetables that are cooked	140	140

*Recommended temperature must be maintained for at least 15 seconds on the thermometer dial.
**Allow three-minute rest time.

Food Handling Self-Inspection Checklist

This checklist incorporates both USDA recommendations and Food Code guidelines.
The more conservative of the guidelines are used.

Worker Preparation

Item	OBS Y	OBS N	Comments	Item	OBS Y	OBS N	Comments
Workers wash hands before beginning to work, during work as needed and after touching anything that might be a source of contamination (telephone, raw meat, smoking, eating, drinking, sneezing, coughing, using the toilet, handling trash or garbage, touching head, hair or face.)				Workers' hands do not touch ready-to-eat food.			
				Plastic gloves are worn over cuts and abrasions.			
				Workers do not sneeze or cough near foods. Workers do not have sores or signs of transmittable illness. Workers who are ill are sent home.			

Preparation (Thawing) and Preparation*

Frozen products are thawed in refrigerators at temperatures 40 degrees Fahrenheit or lower.				Raw products are separated from cooked and/or ready-to-eat products during preparation.			
The lowest shelf in the refrigerator is used for thawing PHF* to prevent cross contamination.				PHF products are kept at temperatures below 40 degrees Fahrenheit. If not, food is discarded after 2 hours. Temperatures of PHF products are checked in the product's center or thickest part.			
If needed for immediate cooking, frozen PHF products are thawed under potable running water at 70 degrees Fahrenheit or lower, or in the microwave.				Batch cooking (preparing food as needed) is used to reduce holding times of foods.			
If PHF products which have been defrosted are maintained above 40 degrees Fahrenheit for more than 2 hours, the foods are discarded.				Foods are cooked to recommended internal temperatures.			

Serving Prepared Foods*

If hot PHF products are held below 140 F for more than 2** hours, they are discarded. If held for less than 2 hours, they are reheated to 165 F.				After preparation, cold PHF products are held at 40 degrees Fahrenheit. Temperatures are checked every 2 hours. If PHF are held above 40 degrees for more than 2 hours**, products are discarded.			
Hot PHF products are cooled to 70 degrees Fahrenheit within 2 hours and to 40 degrees within 4 hours. If cooled too slowly, products are discarded.				Transported foods are held at > 140 or < 40 degrees Fahrenheit. If not, foods are discarded.			
Reused PHF products are heated to 165 degrees Fahrenheit (in the thickest part) within 2 hours. If not, foods are discarded.							

Cleaning and Sanitizing

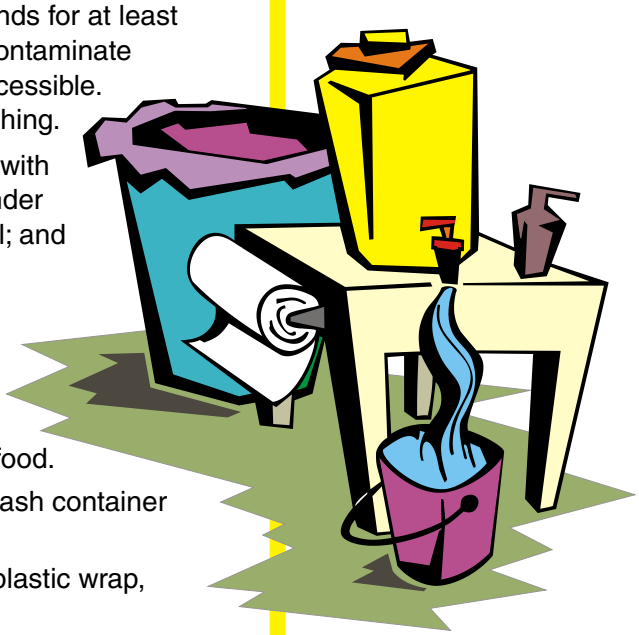
Kitchenware is washed, rinsed and sanitized after each use.				For a heat sanitizing dishmachine, the wash (110 degrees Fahrenheit), the rinse (110 degrees) and the sanitizing (180 degrees) water temperatures are checked and maintained.			
The third sink of a three compartment sink is used to sanitize by immersing items in either: 1. hot water (171 degrees Fahrenheit) for 30 seconds or 2. properly mixed chemical sanitizing solution for one minute.				For fixed equipment, removable parts are removed after each use, then washed, rinsed and sanitized by immersion.			
				For fixed equipment, unremovable food contact surfaces are washed, rinsed and sanitized.			

* PHF = potentially hazardous foods. These foods are generally rich in protein and moist, which can promote the growth of bacteria.
**Note: According to North Dakota's adaptation of the Food Code, potentially hazardous foods that have been removed from temperature control for more than four hours should be discarded. USDA recommendations use a two-hour rule, which is incorporated here.

Adapted from Cooperative Extension Service, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas. Elizabeth Barrett, Assistant Professor, HRIMD; Karen P. Penner, Extension State Leader, F&N.

Always work with clean hands. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds before you begin and after any task that may contaminate your hands. Hand-washing stations must be on site and accessible. Using gloves and wet wipes is not a substitute for handwashing.

Temporary stations (see diagram) should have a container with warm, potable, running water; a container/bucket placed under the tap or spigot to catch the wastewater; soap; paper towel; and a trash receptacle.



Keep Food Safe When Serving

- Wear hair restraints during preparation and service.
- Serve food with scoops, tongs, plastic gloves, deli paper and ladles. Bare hands should not come in contact with food.
- Use disposable paper cups and utensils and provide a trash container for customers.
- Serve pre-portioned foods and cover appropriately with plastic wrap, foil or plastic bags.
- Use single-serve condiment packets or dispense from squeeze bottles.
- Hold potentially hazardous cold foods at 40 degrees Fahrenheit or below.
- Hold potentially hazardous cooked foods at 140 degrees Fahrenheit or above during display and service.
- Reheat previously prepared food to 165 degrees Fahrenheit, using a stove, oven or microwave.
- Use hot-holding equipment, such as chafing dishes, roasters, electric slow cookers and warming trays.
- Check frequently to be sure food stays at or above 140 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Do not use an electric slow cooker to reheat food. These appliances are meant to hold "hot" food hot, not to reheat foods.

Keep Leftovers Safe

- Discard any food left out at room temperature for more than two hours, according to USDA guidelines.

Permits and Requirements

Local health departments grant food stand permits and licenses on a per-event basis. Contact the local or state health department for information concerning rules and regulations or questions you have regarding food offered to the public.

For more information about food safety, visit these websites:

NDSU Extension Nutrition, Food Safety and Health: www.ag.ndsu.edu/food
North Dakota Department of Health: www.hhs.nd.gov
Partnership for Food Safety: www.fightbac.org

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