

Food Bites

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Food Safety in the Summer Heat

Tips for cooling food and keeping it cold.

Here Comes the Sun!

Advice for keeping food cool in the summer.

As we warm up after a chilly winter, it's important to take action to keep foods cold at 41°F or below. The following tips and practices can help keep your food cold and your customers healthy.

Tips

- Broken equipment won't keep food cold. Identify equipment that needs repair or routine maintenance.
- Refrigerators that have trouble keeping foods at 41°F or below during colder weather need repair or replacement to work properly during warmer weather.
- Repair or adjust refrigerators that have puddles or ice build-up.
- Examine seals around doors for gaps that allow cold air to escape.

Best Practices

Help employees keep their cool during inspections. Follow these best practices:

- Check refrigerators and freezers at the beginning of each day. Make sure they are turned on and working.
- Check temperatures throughout the day. Use a thin-tipped digital thermometer.

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Remember!

Keep equipment in good repair. It saves energy, reduces food waste and prevents small problems from becoming large ones.

SPRING 2017



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Tacoma-Pierce County
Health Department
Healthy People in Healthy Communities

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- Maintain temperature logs. Look for problems that could lead to improper holding temperatures.
- Think strategically! Some foods, such as cut lettuce, are harder to cold-hold than others. Prioritize space in refrigerators for potentially hazardous foods.

Importance of Certified Food Safety Managers

By Steve Lacy, Fred Meyer Food Safety Manager, Pierce County Food Advisory Board Member



In my almost 30 years in the food industry, I have witnessed many food safety issues with sometimes catastrophic results. I started working at a manufacturing plant out of school and quickly understood the importance of sanitation and making things to formula to protect customers from illness. I then worked in research and development, where understanding processes, ingredients, and formulation were keys to creating safe, healthy foods. I have worked as recall manager and have seen the hundreds of cases each year where manufacturers and retailers are forced to pull product that could make people sick. Most recently, I am in a position where I train and coach retail food service workers on the importance of food safety. Training is a common thread that is a crucial element to everything in food preparation.

Whether you are located in a manufacturing plant, restaurant, hospital cafeteria, school lunchroom, nursing home, or a retail food store, food safety is an essential element of the operation. No one wants to make anyone sick from a foodborne illness with food that has been prepared in their facility. One of the best ways to help prevent this is to have at least one person in charge per facility who is a Food Safety Manager Certified. The certification training involves attending a one day course on the critical aspects of food safety.

For over 10 years Fred Meyer stores have required that all management associates be Food Safety Manager Certified. This usually results in at least five managers at every location having certification. We also strongly encourage our department managers and food assistant managers be certified. We consider this training to be essential in creating a culture of food safety excellence in our stores. While our associates aren't always perfect, the training ensures that every manager knows and understands the important facets of food safety. As a result, we have not had a food safety foodborne outbreak in many, many years. (Knock on wood!)

Minimizing the occurrence of foodborne illness risk factors in a food service or retail food operation does not happen by accident. The importance of having knowledgeable and effective managers on-site during operating hours cannot be overstated. The person in charge of a food establishment is responsible for the policies and procedures that prevent the transmission of foodborne illness are established, routinely followed, and corrective actions are taken to protect the health of the consumer.

Studies conducted by the Food and Drug Administration showed that during inspections, facilities WITH a certified manager had fewer food safety risk factors and fewer violations than facilities WITHOUT a certified manager. These include the areas of poor personal hygiene, contaminated equipment and improper temperature control. Education and training are the keys.

The Tacoma-Pierce Health Department offers a Food Manager Training Course at frequent intervals throughout the year. People who successfully complete the certified course and pass the accredited exam will meet the "Demonstration of Knowledge" requirements.

For more information please visit: <http://www.tpchd.org/food/food-manager-course/>

Cooling: Dos and Don'ts



- **Do** make sure there is a one inch gap between cooling pans to allow for air flow. If you need space in your walk-in cooler, obtain a speed rack.

- **Do** place hot food above food

that is already cold to prevent warming the cold food.

- **Do** cut whole intact pieces of meat (such as roasts), into smaller four inch pieces. Place them in a single layer on a pan.
- **Do** cool food that warmed during preparation. Activities such as mixing, cutting/slicing, blending, and using room temperature ingredients warm food.
- **Do** check the temperature of cooled food with a thermometer before covering or moving to a larger container. All parts of the food must be 41°F or below.
- **Don't** cover food, even partially. Covers (lids, plastic wrap, etc.) trap heat and slow cooling.
- **Don't** cool more than one pan at a time in a steel door reach-in cooler.
- **Don't** heap foods. The entire pan should have a food depth of no more than two inches.
- **Don't** put warm food in preparation coolers (i.e. sandwich coolers).

Save Money and Energy

Reducing energy costs by 20% can decrease your cost-per-plate by one-third, according to Tacoma Power.

Contact your utility for the latest incentives:

Puget Sound Energy has incentives to save on energy-efficient commercial kitchen equipment, reducing waste, lighting, new construction, and

more at www.pse.com/savingsandenergycenter/ForBusinesses or call an Energy Advisor at 1-800-562-1482, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Tacoma Power offers a variety of commercial rebates to help reduce operating costs and maximize profits at www.mytpu.org/your-business/ways-to-save/

For more information contact Food Service Rebates and other Commercial Conservation Programs at (253) 502-8619, power@cityoftacoma.org

Other utilities also offer rebates, including:


- **PenLight:** <https://www.penlight.org/energy-services/conservation-2/>
- **Elmhurst:** <https://www.elmhurstmutual.org/conservation-programs/>
- **Lakeview:** <http://lakeviewlight.com/conservation/commercial-conservation/>

Reusable Temperature Logs Coming Soon!

We are making new daily hot and cold holding temperature logs. Food inspectors have collected feedback from food workers and managers. The reusable logs can be written on with dry erase markers. They can be placed directly on equipment. QR codes link directly to food safety videos in multiple languages.

Our goal is to provide an easy-to-use tool and visual reminder to check food temperatures.


Keep Food At or Below 41°F

Date	Open	Scan for more information: 
Middle	Late	

Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
Healthy People in Healthy Communities

Take multiple food temperatures and record highest temperature.

Keep Food At or Above 135°F

Date	Open	Scan for more information: 
Middle	Late	

Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
Healthy People in Healthy Communities

Take multiple food temperatures and record lowest temperature.

Become a Food Inspector

Clean floors, restrained hair, and sanitizer concentration are important to food establishments. However, these are not our main focus. We focus on overall food safety and foodborne illness prevention. Our team is motivated to make our community safe and healthy. Our mission is to reduce the violations that lead to foodborne illness. We do this by providing education and conducting inspections.



Glove image adapted from Program Executive Office Soldier, CC BY 2.0

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