



## CHILLING

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Some foods need to be kept chilled to keep them safe, such as sandwiches, cooked food, salad ingredients, soft cheeses, cooked meats, cream and desserts, food with a 'use by' date and food that says 'keep refrigerated' on the label.



This section tells you about storing and displaying chilled food, chilling down hot food, freezing and defrosting.

## SAFE METHOD:

# CHILLED STORAGE AND DISPLAYING CHILLED FOOD



Harmful bacteria can grow in food that is not chilled properly.

SAFETY POINT	WHY?	HOW DO YOU DO THIS?	
<p>Certain foods need to be kept chilled to keep them safe, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• food with a 'use by' date</li> <li>• food that says 'keep refrigerated' on the label</li> <li>• food you have cooked and will not serve immediately</li> <li>• ready-to-eat food such as salads, cooked meats, sandwiches and desserts.</li> </ul>	<p>If these types of food are not kept cold enough harmful bacteria could grow.</p>	<p>Do you check regularly that these types of food are kept chilled?</p> <p>Yes</p>	<p>If not, what do you do?</p>
<p>Make sure that you do not use food after its 'use by' date.</p> <p>For dishes you have prepared or cooked, it is a good idea to use stickers, or another method of labelling, to keep track of when food should be used or thrown away.</p> <p>If you are not sure how long to keep food, ask your environmental health officer for advice.</p>	<p>Food with 'use by' dates, cooked dishes and other ready-to-eat food have a limited shelf life. If you keep them too long they might not be safe to eat.</p>		<p>How do you keep track of when food should be used or thrown away?</p>
<p>Follow the manufacturer's instructions on how to use fridges and chilled display equipment.</p>	<p>It is important to use equipment properly to make sure food is kept cold enough.</p>	<p>Do you follow the manufacturer's instructions for using your:</p> <p>Fridge?</p> <p>Chilled display unit?</p>	<p>If not, what do you do?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-cool the display unit before you put chilled food in it.</li> <li>• Only display as much food as you think you will need.</li> <li>• Display food for the shortest time possible.</li> </ul> <p>You could also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use a 'dummy' portion for display (which will not be eaten)</li> <li>• use photographs to show customers what the food looks like.</li> </ul>	<p>It is important to keep chilled food cold while it is on display to prevent harmful bacteria from growing in the food.</p>		<p>What do you do to make sure chilled food is displayed safely?</p>



CHECK IT	HOW DO YOU DO THIS?
<p>It is recommended that fridges and chilled display equipment should be set at 5°C or below. This is to make sure that chilled food is kept at 8°C or below.</p> <p>This is a legal requirement in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and recommended in Scotland.</p> <p>You should check the temperature of your chilling equipment at least once a day starting with your opening checks (see the 'Opening and closing checks' safe method in the Management section).</p>	<p>Some equipment will have a digital display or dial to show what temperature it is set at. You can use this to check the temperature of your equipment.</p> <p>If you do this, you should check regularly that the temperature shown on the display/dial is accurate using a fridge thermometer.</p> <p>How do you check the temperature of chilling equipment?</p> <p><b>Fridge:</b> Digital display Dial thermometer</p> <p><b>Chilled display unit:</b> Digital display Dial thermometer</p> <p>If you do not do this, what do you do?</p>

## THINK TWICE!

### Chilled food must be kept at 8°C or below, except for certain exceptions.

When you display cold food, e.g. on a buffet, you should use suitable chilled display equipment to keep it at 8°C or below. If this is not possible, you can display food out of chilled storage for up to four hours, but you can only do this once. Make sure you know how long food has been on display or kept out, and check its temperature regularly.

Food that has not been used within four hours can be put back in the fridge and kept at 8°C or below until it is used. If it has been out for more than four hours it should be thrown away.

If you do take food out of chilled storage to display it, remember not to mix new food with the food that is already on display. This could lead to the older food being left out for too long.

## PROVE IT

If you would like extra reassurance that your chilling equipment is working effectively, you can use a temperature probe to check food as a one-off test to prove that your method keeps food at a safe temperature. (See the 'Prove it' safe method in the Management section for advice on using probes safely.)

WHAT TO DO IF THINGS GO WRONG	HOW TO STOP THIS HAPPENING AGAIN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If your fridge or display equipment breaks down, use other equipment, or move the food to a cold area. If you cannot do this, or you do not know how long the equipment has been broken down, contact the environmental health officer at your local authority for advice.</li><li>• If food on display has not been kept chilled for more than four hours, throw it away.</li></ul> <p>Remember that some foods need extra care e.g. rice. See the safe method 'Foods that need extra care' in the Cooking section.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review your chilled display method and see if you can make it safer (using the front of this sheet).</li><li>• Train staff again on this safe method.</li><li>• Improve staff supervision.</li><li>• If you have frequent problems with your chilling equipment, consider whether it is suitable for your business. Generally, commercial equipment will be more suitable for catering.</li></ul>

**Write down what went wrong and what you did about it in your diary.**









## SAFE METHOD:

# CHILLING DOWN HOT FOOD



Harmful bacteria can grow in food that is not chilled down as quickly as possible.

SAFETY POINT	WHY?
If you have cooked food that you will not serve immediately, chill it down as quickly as possible and then put it in the fridge.	Harmful bacteria can grow in food that is left to chill slowly.
Avoid cooking large quantities of food in advance, unless you need to.	Large quantities of food are more difficult to chill down quickly, especially solid food.

OPTIONS FOR CHILLING DOWN FOOD (YOU CAN USE ONE OR MORE OF THESE)	WHY?	TICK IF YOU DO THIS
Divide food into smaller portions.	Smaller amounts of food chill down more quickly. 	
Cut joints of meat in half.	Smaller pieces of meat will cool more quickly. 	
Cover pans of hot food and move them to a colder area e.g. a storage room, or stand them in cold water. You can also use ice to speed up chilling.	This will make the contents of the pans chill more quickly. 	
Stir food regularly while it is chilling down.	Stirring helps food chill more evenly. 	
Cover hot food and move it to a colder area (e.g. a larder).	Food will chill more quickly in a colder place. 	
Spread food out on a tray e.g. rice.	Spreading the food out will help it cool more quickly. 	



OPTIONS FOR CHILLING DOWN FOOD (YOU CAN USE ONE OR MORE OF THESE)	WHY?	TICK IF YOU DO THIS
If you have a 'cool' setting on your oven, use it to chill down food.	Some ovens have a 'cool' setting, which can help to chill down food by increasing the air flow around it. (The oven should be cool first.)	
Use a blast chiller to chill down food.	A blast chiller is specially designed to chill down hot foods quickly and safely.	
If you have another method of chilling down hot food, e.g. putting pasta under cold running water, write the details here:		

## PROVE IT

If you would like to compare different chilling options, try them out with the same food. You will only need to do this once.

When you have just cooked the food, use a probe to test its temperature. (See the 'Prove it' method in the Management section for advice on using probes safely.) Then test the temperature again at regular intervals to find out how fast the food is being chilled down. Remember to use a clean probe each time you check the food.

Repeat the process with different chilling options to find out which is most effective.

WHAT TO DO IF THINGS GO WRONG	HOW TO STOP THIS HAPPENING AGAIN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>If food has not been chilled down safely, re-cook it, if appropriate, or throw it away.</li></ul> <p>Remember that some foods need extra care e.g. rice. See the safe method 'Foods that need extra care' in the Cooking section.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Review your chilling methods to make sure they are working properly. If appropriate, try out different methods and choose the one that best meets your needs.</li><li>Make sure you always allow enough time and make portions small enough.</li><li>Train staff again on this safe method.</li><li>Improve staff supervision.</li><li>If you chill down lots of hot food in your business you may wish to consider using a blast chiller.</li></ul>

Write down what went wrong and what you did about it in your diary.




## SAFE METHOD:

# DEFROSTING



Harmful bacteria can grow in food that is not defrosted properly.



SAFETY POINT	WHY?	HOW DO YOU DO THIS?
Food should be thoroughly defrosted before cooking (unless the manufacturer's instructions tell you to cook from frozen or you have a proven safe method).	If food is still frozen or partially frozen, it will take longer to cook.  The outside of the food could be cooked, but the centre might not be, which means it could contain harmful bacteria.	Do you check food is thoroughly defrosted before cooking?  Yes  If not, what do you do?
OPTIONS FOR DEFROSTING FOOD		
1. Ideally, plan ahead to leave enough time and space to defrost small amounts of food in the fridge.	Putting food in the fridge will keep it at a safe temperature while it is defrosting.	Do you use this method? Yes  How much time do you allow for defrosting?
2. If you cannot defrost food in the fridge, you could put it in a container and then place it under cold running water.	Cold water will help to speed up defrosting without allowing the outside of the food to get too warm.  	Do you use this method? Yes  Which foods do you defrost in this way?
3. Raw meat and poultry (including large joints and whole birds), should not be defrosted under cold running water unless they are in a sealed container. For more information: <a href="https://www.food.gov.uk/news-updates/campaigns/campylobacter/actnow">food.gov.uk/news-updates/campaigns/campylobacter/actnow</a>	Harmful bacteria could be spread, contaminating sinks, taps and surfaces.	How do you defrost raw meat and poultry?
4. If you use the sink to defrost some foods, make sure the sink is clean and empty. The sink should be cleaned and then disinfected after being used for defrosting.	Cold water will help speed up defrosting.	Do you use this method? Yes  Which foods do you defrost in this way?



SAFETY POINTS	WHY?	HOW DO YOU DO THIS
5. Or you could defrost food in the microwave on the 'defrost' setting.	This is a fast way to defrost food.	Do you use this method? Yes Which foods do you defrost in this way?
6. If necessary you could defrost food at room temperature. Follow the manufacturer's defrosting instructions. Food should be left out at room temperature for the shortest time possible. Ideally, defrost these foods in the fridge.	Foods will defrost quite quickly at room temperature, but harmful bacteria could grow in food if it gets too warm while defrosting.	Do you use this method? Yes Which foods do you defrost in this way?
7. If you have another method of defrosting, write the details here:		Which foods do you defrost in this way?

### THINK TWICE!

Keep meat/poultry separate from other food when it is defrosting, to prevent cross-contamination. Once food has been defrosted you should use it immediately (within one day).

CHECK IT	WHY?	HOW DO YOU DO THIS?
When you think food has defrosted, it is important to check to make sure.	The outside may look defrosted but the inside could still be frozen.	Check for ice crystals in the food using your hand or a skewer. Do you use this check? Yes 
		With birds, check the joints are flexible. Do you use this check? Yes 
		If you use another check, write the details here:

WHAT TO DO IF THINGS GO WRONG	HOW TO STOP THIS HAPPENING AGAIN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If food has not fully defrosted, continue to defrost the food until no ice crystals are left. Test again before cooking or reheating.</li><li>• Speed up the defrosting process e.g. by using cold water or a microwave (see the front of this sheet).</li><li>• Use an alternative menu item. If you do not have time to defrost for longer, replace the dish with a similar dish that is ready to serve.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Change your defrosting method and make it safer, e.g. defrost smaller amounts.</li><li>• Make sure you allow enough time to defrost.</li><li>• Train staff again on this safe method.</li><li>• Improve staff supervision.</li><li>• If you defrost lots of food in your business you may wish to consider creating extra fridge space or using a special defrosting cabinet.</li></ul>

**Write down what went wrong and what you did about it in your diary.**







## SAFE METHOD:

# FREEZING



It is important to take care when freezing food and handle frozen food safely.

SAFETY POINT	WHY?	HOW DO YOU DO THIS?
Put frozen food in the freezer as soon as it is delivered.	If frozen food starts to defrost, harmful bacteria could grow.	Is frozen food put in the freezer as soon as it is delivered? Yes      No
If you are freezing fresh food, freeze it as soon as it has been delivered or prepared.  Freeze hot food as soon as it has been properly chilled down.	The longer you wait before freezing food, the greater the chance of harmful bacteria growing. (See the 'Chilling down hot food' method.)  	Is fresh and cooked food put in the freezer as soon as it has been delivered, prepared, or chilled down? Yes      No
Divide food into smaller portions and put it in containers or freezer bags before freezing.	Smaller portions will freeze (and defrost) more quickly.  The centre of larger portions takes longer to freeze, allowing harmful bacteria to grow.  Using containers and freezer bags prevents cross-contamination.  	Is food divided into smaller portions to help it freeze better? Yes      No  Is frozen food stored in containers or freezer bags? Yes      No

## HOW DO YOU DO THIS?

If you answered 'No' to any of the above questions, write down what you do:



## THINK TWICE!

When you freeze food, make a note (e.g. on a sticker) of the date it is frozen and the date when it is removed for defrosting, including the day, month and year.

If you freeze food that has a 'use by' date, (for using later) make sure you freeze it before the use by date is past, and it is important that you clearly note the date you are freezing it.

Once food has been defrosted you should use it immediately (within one day). See the 'Prove it' in the Management section.

### WHAT TO DO IF THINGS GO WRONG

If you find that your freezer is not working properly, you should do the following things:

- **Food that is still frozen** (i.e. hard and icy) should be moved to an alternative freezer straight away. If there is no alternative freezer, defrost food using the 'Defrosting' safe method.
- **Food that has begun to defrost** (i.e. starting to get soft and/or with liquid coming out of it) should be moved to a suitable place to continue defrosting using the 'Defrosting' safe method.
- **Fully defrosted food** (i.e. soft and warm) should be cooked, if appropriate (e.g. raw meat and poultry), until it is piping hot all the way through. After cooking, use the food immediately or chill or freeze it safely straight away. If this is not possible, throw it away.
- **Food that has to be kept frozen** (e.g. ice cream) cannot be re-frozen once it has started to defrost. You will have to use it immediately or throw it away.

Remember, some foods need extra care. See the 'Foods that need extra care' safe method in the Cooking section.

### HOW TO STOP THIS HAPPENING AGAIN

- Get your freezer mended or buy a new one.
- Have freezers serviced regularly and check that they are working properly as part of your opening checks.
- Re-organise freezers so there is more space and they are kept closed as much as possible.
- Train staff again on this safe method.
- Increase staff supervision.

**Write down what went wrong and what you did about it in your diary.**

