

Cooking, Reheating and Hot Holding Fact Sheet and Hygiene Rating Improver No. 2



Cooking

Thorough cooking kills harmful bacteria in food. So it is extremely important to make sure that food is cooked properly:

- Where appropriate, follow the manufacturer's cooking instructions
- Always check that food is piping hot (steaming) all the way through
 - Check that poultry birds are cooked properly in the thickest part of the leg (meat should not be pink or red)
 - Check that pork and processed meat products (e.g. sausages and burgers) are piping hot all the way through with no pink or red centre. This is because there could be harmful bacteria in the middle of these foods.
 - Check the outside surfaces of whole cuts/joints of beef and lamb are fully cooked e.g. by sealing in a pan.
 - Make sure soups and sauces are simmering and stir frequently.
 - Make sure dishes such as cottage pie and lasagne are piping hot in the centre. If you are cooking a large dish check it in several places.

Visit the [Food Standards Agency's YouTube Page](#) for Training Video on Cooking Food Safely.

Reheating

Reheating means cooking again, not just warming up. Always reheat food until it is piping hot all the way through. Food should only be reheated once. If ovens or grills are used for reheating make sure they are preheated. If you are reheating food in a microwave, stir it regularly to make sure the centre of the food is thoroughly heated.

You can use a probe thermometer to check food has been reheated to a safe temperature. The food is safe if it has reached a high enough temperature for a long enough time. Examples of safe time/temperature combinations include:

- **80°C for at least 6 seconds** or
- **75°C for at least 30 seconds**

Hot Holding

It is very important to keep food hot until serving to prevent harmful bacteria from growing. This includes foods comprising or containing meat, fish, eggs, milk, soft cheese, cereals (including rice and pasta), pulses and vegetables.

You should use suitable equipment to keep food hot, for example:

- Bain-marie
- Soup kettle
- Hot cabinet



Hot holding



Soup kettle



Bain-marie

The equipment you use must keep hot food **above 63°C**:

- Preheat the equipment before you put any food in it
- Ensure food is thoroughly cooked and piping hot before putting it in the equipment
- Use a temperature probe to check the temperature of food in hot holding

If this is not possible, hot food can be displayed below 63°C for a maximum 2 hours. For example at a buffet. If you want to display foods this way, records must be kept of the time and finish on the display period.

After 2 hours the food must be:

- reheated until it is piping hot and then served immediately, or
- chilled down as quickly as possible and stored at 8°C or less, or
- thrown away.

The following bakery products sold to consumers with a short shelf life are considered acceptable to be exempt from hot holding requirements. This includes:

- uncut baked egg and milk pastry products, e.g. custard tarts, intended for sale within 24 hours of production, or
- cooked pies, pasties and sausage rolls that are completely encased in pastry to which nothing has been added after baking, intended to be sold on the day of production or the next day.

Using A Probe Thermometer

Care must be taken when using probe thermometers, so that they do not contaminate, or taint the food being probed. Make sure probes are kept clean and disinfected before use with ready to eat food, otherwise probed food must be discarded. Where antibacterial wipes are used, these must be suitable for use with food.

Probe thermometers should also be checked regularly for accuracy. As a helpful reference in doing your own checks; pure water and ice mixture should measure between -1°C - +1°C, and pure boiling water should measure between 99°C and 101°C. If your thermometer appears not to be working correctly it should be replaced or sent for service. For further advice refer to the manufacturer's instructions.

FOOD HYGIENE RATING

STEP	IMPROVE MY RATING	Done
1	I have put in place methods to ensure food is cooked and reheated thoroughly.	
2	Cooking (orange) section of Safer Food Better Business pack has been filled in and is being followed.	
3	Hot food is held above 63°C is being checked regularly using probe thermometer.	
4	Hot food held below 63°C is kept for a maximum of 2 hours and records are kept to demonstrate this.	

For more food safe factsheets visit www.runnymede.gov.uk