



Cooling and reheating hazardous foods

The Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code *Food Safety Standard 3.2.2 - Food Safety Practices and General Requirements* (the Standard) requires potentially hazardous foods to be kept at specified temperatures for cooling and heating. Food businesses must comply with this requirement or demonstrate that a safe alternative system is in place to ensure that food stays safe to eat.

What are potentially hazardous foods?

Potentially hazardous foods are foods that must be kept at a particular temperature to minimise the growth of food poisoning bacteria that may be in the food, or to stop the formation of toxins.

Examples of potentially hazardous foods include:

- raw and cooked meat, or foods containing meat such as casseroles, curries and lasagne
- dairy products such as milk, custard and dairy-based desserts
- seafood (excluding live seafood)
- processed or cut fruits and vegetables, such as salads
- cooked rice and pasta
- foods containing egg, beans, nuts or other protein-rich food such as quiche and soy products
- foods that contain any of the above foods including sandwiches and rolls.

Keeping foods under temperature control

To ensure food safety, potentially hazardous food must be kept at 5°C or colder or at 60°C or hotter, when it is received, displayed, transported or stored. If you want to receive, display, transport or store potentially hazardous food at another temperature, you must demonstrate that a safe alternative system is in place to ensure that the food stays safe to eat.

You do not have to keep potentially hazardous food at any specified temperature during processing or preparation. However, you must minimise processing or preparation time so that bacteria do not get a chance to multiply to dangerous levels.

Reheating potentially hazardous food

Potentially hazardous food that has been cooked and cooled, must be reheated rapidly (not exceeding 2 hours) to 60°C or hotter, if it is to be held hot e.g. in a bain-marie.

It is recommended that previously cooked and cooled potentially hazardous food be heated to at least 70°C for at least 2 minutes. Potentially hazardous food that has already been reheated should not be cooled and reheated a second time.

The above requirement does not apply to food that is for immediate consumption, which may be reheated and served at any temperature.

Cooling potentially hazardous food

If you cook potentially hazardous food and cool it for use later, the food must be cooled to 5°C or colder as quickly as possible. There may be food poisoning bacteria in the food even though it has been cooked. Faster cooling times will limit the time that these bacteria are able to grow to dangerous levels.

The Standard requires food to be cooled:

- from 60°C to 21°C in a maximum of two hours; then
- from 21°C to 5°C within a further maximum period of four hours.

Food may only be cooled over a longer time period if it can be demonstrated that a safe alternative system is in place.

An efficient way to cool foods quickly is to separate the food into small batches and store in shallow dishes.

For further information

The Queensland Department of Health has a variety of fact sheets with detailed information on food safety. These can be accessed at www.health.qld.gov.au/foodsafety.

Contact your local government if you have any further questions. Contact details can be found at www.dlqp.qld.gov.au/local-government-directory.html or the White Pages.