

Preventing the Growth of Harmful Bacteria in Food

The temperature danger zone (41F - 135F)

- TCS (Time/Temperature Control for Safety) food held in the temperature danger zone for too long will allow for the growth of harmful bacteria that can make you sick.

Ways to prevent Bacterial Growth in Food

- Hold food cold ($\leq 41F$)
- Hold food hot ($\geq 135F$)
- Cool hot foods quickly (135F-70F within the first 2 hours and 135F-41F within a total of 6 hours)
 - Cooling methods - Place food on shallow pans to create more surface area and then place into cooler
 - Leave uncovered or vented to allow for air exchange and then place into cooler
 - Consider the use of ice wands, ice baths to assist in the cooling process
 - Place food into the freezer to quickly cool
 - Using combinations of these methods can always be helpful
- Cool food items from room temperature ingredients to $\leq 41F$ within 4 hours

Date-Marking Ready-to-Eat Time/Temperature Control for Safety (RTE-TCS) foods

- Some harmful bacteria can grow at a slow rate under refrigerated conditions (33F-41F)
- Date-marking allows you to keep track of when food is to be discarded before harmful bacteria has the time to grow and reach harmful levels that can make you sick
- Date mark for 7 days for RTE-TCS foods held cold at $\leq 41F$
- Time starts with the day of food preparation OR the day the container is opened (i.e. can goods, commercially prepared and packaged foods)
- Freezing the RTE-TCS food stops the clock. So keep track of the dates before and after freezing the food.
- Date-marking exemptions-some deli salads, preserved fish, salt cured products, sausage, some cheese, cultured dairy (yogurt, sour cream)