

FARMERS MARKETS



How to Handle Hot Foods

If you leave food at room temperature for too long, bacteria can grow rapidly to dangerous levels that can cause illness. Bacteria grow fastest in the danger zone between 40 F and 140 F and can double in numbers in just 20 minutes.

Keep hot food safe

- All foods must be completely cooked and at a safe internal temperature before serving.
- Hot food should be kept at an internal temperature of 140 F or higher.
- Check the temperature of the food using a calibrated food thermometer.
- Use cleaned and sanitized utensils.
- Serve or keep food warm in chafing dishes, preheated steam tables, slow cookers or heating trays.
- Check the warmer label to make sure that it can hold food above 140 F.
- Cooked eggs and egg dishes, such as quiches and soufflés, can be cooled for later serving, but must be completely reheated to 165 F before serving.
- Never leave food at room temperature for more than two hours. If the room or outdoor temperature is above 90 F, food should not be left out for more than one hour.



Sources of contamination

- Equipment.
- Employees (person in direct contact with the food).
- Air.
- Water.
- Sewage.
- Insects and rodents.

Minimize potential contamination

- Avoid direct contact of food with human hands.
- Keep food covered or in an enclosed space at the appropriate temperature.
- The food on display should be protected by a transparent shield to avoid contamination.
- Clean or discard any food that was touched or in close contact with an uncleaned surface.
- Clean and sanitize equipment and utensils between uses.
- Clean and disinfect storage areas, and apply appropriate control and protection against rodents, insects, dust and other sources of contamination.
- Garbage accumulation should not be permitted in processing, serving and storage areas.

Typical Louisiana hot dishes that must be kept at the right temperature for sale

- Pasta.
- Jambalaya.
- Gumbo.
- Crawfish.



Why is maintaining the temperature of the food important?

Making sure that food is cooked to the proper internal temperature is important, but it is also important to check the temperature afterwards. Food kept at an unsafe temperature can cause foodborne illness. Improper storage of food can cause the growth of pathogens, such as *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Salmonella* spp., *Listeria monocytogenes*, *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 and *Campylobacter*, to dangerous levels.



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Pub. 3864-E (Online Only) 11/22

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