Internal Cooking Temperatures: Restaurant Safety Meeting Kit

WHAT’S AT STAKE

It’s important to use a food thermometer to measure the internal temperature of food accurately. In a restaurant, it’s also important to train staff on proper cooking temperatures and monitor them to ensure that food is cooked to the appropriate temperature every time.

WHAT’S THE DANGER

HAZARDS OF NOT COOKING FOOD TO CORRECT INTERNAL TEMPERATURE

- **Risk of foodborne illness:** If food is not cooked to the correct internal temperature, harmful bacteria and other microorganisms can survive and cause foodborne illness.
- **Cross-contamination:** If raw and cooked food come into contact with each other during preparation or cooking, cross-contamination can occur.
- **Inconsistent cooking:** If food is not cooked to the correct internal temperature, it may be undercooked or unevenly cooked.
- **Legal liability:** If a restaurant serves undercooked or improperly cooked food and customers become sick as a result, the restaurant may be liable for any damages or legal action taken against them.
- **Bacterial growth:** Food that is stored at temperatures that are too warm can promote the growth of harmful bacteria, such as Salmonella and E. coli. This can result in food poisoning and other serious illnesses.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

FOODBORNE ILLNESS PROTECTION MEASURES FOR RESTAURANTS

Use a Food Thermometer

- Insert the thermometer through the thickest part of the meat, all the way to the middle, not touching any bone.
- For burgers, insert food thermometer through the side of the patty.
- Check each piece separately if you have more than one piece.
- Use a digital thermometer for more accurate readings.

Cleaning and Preparation

- Clean food thermometer in warm, soapy water before each use.
- Always wash your hands before and after you touch raw meat.
- Wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 15 seconds, or with an alcohol-based hand rub.
- If you've used a plate or utensils to handle raw food, don't use them again until you've washed them.
- Use separate cutting boards for produce and raw meat.
- Use paper towels to wipe kitchen surfaces or change dishcloths daily.
- Sanitize countertops, cutting boards, and utensils before and after preparing food.
- Keep cold food cold and hot food hot, so that food never reaches the "temperature danger zone" where bacteria can grow quickly and cause food poisoning.

BEST INTERNAL COOKING TEMPERATURES FOR FOOD

Poultry: Chicken, turkey, duck, and other poultry should be cooked to an internal temperature of at least 165°F (74°C) to kill any harmful bacteria that may be present.

Beef, Pork, and Lamb: Ground meat such as beef, pork, and lamb should be cooked to an internal temperature of at least 160°F (71°C) to ensure that harmful bacteria such as E. coli and Salmonella are destroyed.

Fish: Fish should be cooked to an internal temperature of at least 145°F (63°C) to kill any harmful bacteria that may be present.

Eggs: Egg dishes such as scrambled eggs or omelets should be cooked until the yolks and whites are firm. Egg dishes should be cooked to an internal temperature of at least 160°F (71°C).

Leftovers: When reheating leftovers, they should be heated to an internal temperature of at least 165°F (74°C) to kill any bacteria that may have grown on the food.

TIPS TO PREVENT INTERNAL COOKING TEMPERATURE ISSUES

Use a thermometer: Use a food thermometer to measure the internal temperature of cooked foods, especially meat, poultry, and fish. This helps ensure that the food has reached the correct temperature to kill any harmful bacteria.

Know the recommended temperatures: Familiarize yourself with the recommended internal cooking temperatures for different types of food. For example, beef should be cooked to at least 145°F, while chicken should be cooked to at least 165°F.

Cook food thoroughly: Make sure that food is cooked all the way through to the center. This is especially important for large cuts of meat or poultry, which may take longer to cook.

Avoid cross-contamination: Prevent cross-contamination by using separate cutting boards, utensils, and plates for raw and cooked foods.

Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold: Maintain proper temperatures for cooked food by keeping hot food hot (above 140°F) and cold food cold (below 40°F).

Train staff: Train all staff on the importance of internal cooking temperatures and proper food handling techniques.

FINAL FOUR FOR FOOD SAFETY TAKEWAYS

Clean—Wash hands and surfaces often.

Separate—Separate raw meat from other foods.

Cook—Cook to the right temperature.

Chill—Refrigerate food promptly.

FINAL WORD

By following proper food safety practices, including cooking food to the correct internal temperature, restaurants can ensure that their customers are served delicious and safe food while protecting their health.