



Food hygiene practice notes: Food temperature control

Temperature control requirements are covered by Regulation (EC) 852/2004 & the Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013.

What temperature must food be kept at?

Subject to exemptions, certain foods must be kept:

- chilled at 8°C or below, or
- hot at 63°C or above

Which foods do these laws apply to?

These regulations apply to “high risk” foods. These are foods likely to support the growth of food poisoning bacteria. Here are some examples.

- Meat, fish, eggs, cheese, cereals, pulses or vegetables (or food products containing these or substitutes) which have been cooked and:
 - (a) can be eaten cold e.g. ham, corned beef, pate and quiche
 - (b) will be further heated e.g. rice, pizzas, pasties and pies
- Mould (or other micro-organism) ripened soft cheese e.g. brie, danish blue, stilton and camembert
- Smoked or cured fish e.g. smoked mackerel, smoked salmon and kippers
- Smoked or cured meat when cut or sliced e.g. pepperoni and salami
- Dairy cream cakes and dairy based desserts e.g. fromage frais and mousse
- Prepared vegetable/fruit/rice salads e.g. coleslaw, mixed lettuce and cut tomatoes

Are there any exemptions to the temperature requirements of the regulations?

1. Food ready for service or on display for sale

- (a) “High risk” foods which are served cold may be kept above 8°C for up to four hours.

These notes are produced to help you. They are not a definitive guide on the precise meaning of the regulations.

- (b) “High risk” foods which are served hot may be kept below 63°C for up to two hours.

These foods must not have previously been kept for service or on display outside the “legal” temperatures (i.e. between 8°C and 63°C).

2. Manufacturers’ (etc) recommendations

Occasionally manufacturers may make recommendations as to the temperature that their products should be kept at.

Where these are outside the “legal” temperatures (i.e. between 8°C & 63°C) a scientific assessment will have been carried out to make sure the product is safe. In these cases, it is essential that the food is used within its shelf life.

Recommendations for good practice

The Regulations relate to minimum requirements. To reduce the risk of food poisoning further, here are a few tips.

- **Increase the margin of safety**

Wherever possible, try to keep high risk foods below 5°C or above 75°C.

- **Display food safety**

Ignore the exemptions allowed in the Regulations. Use only temperature controlled equipment to display food e.g. refrigerated cabinets, bain-maries and hot cupboards.

- **Cool food quickly**

There are a number of ways this can be done:

1. Use specialist equipment e.g. blast chillers.
2. Cook in smaller quantities e.g. two small meat joints rather than one.
3. Increase cooling surface area e.g. transfer sauces and stew to flat pans.

- **Reheat food thoroughly**

Reheating food should be avoided wherever possible. However where this is necessary, the temperature should reach 75°C throughout. A probe thermometer can be used to check the food is hot enough.

- **Maintain and check equipment**

Fridge’s, bain-maries etc. should be serviced regularly. It is possible to arrange maintenance contracts that cover this.

The holding temperature of the equipment should be checked by the manager at least once/session.

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- **Keep records**

Records should be kept of temperature checks. There are two ways in which you may do this, you may either:

- a) Record by 'exception' e.g. Write down when things have gone wrong. For example if the fridge breaks down or is operating at more than 8°C, record this temperature and what you did about it.
- b) Record temperatures as a matter of course on a regular basis. The best way to do this is to make up a log book with these headings.

Date	Time	Equipment	°C	Any action taken
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