Using thermometers in food

Fact sheet

One of the most important food safety actions a business can take is to use a probe thermometer to check that potentially hazardous foods are cooked, cooled or held at the correct temperature. Having a working and calibrated temperature probe is also a requirement of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the Code), and all food businesses must comply with the Code.

Do I need a thermometer?

If you store, transport, prepare, cook or sell potentially hazardous food, you **must have a working thermometer available at all times**. Potentially hazardous foods include, but are not limited to, raw or minimally cooked egg products, meat, fish, dairy products, gravies, cooked rice and pasta.

The Code specifies temperatures for safe receipt and storage of potentially hazardous food, as well as the requirements for cooling, however a business must understand the cooking requirements for their own individual products.

What sort of thermometer do I need?

The business needs a probe thermometer, or temperature probe, as this allows the internal temperature of the food to be taken.

How do I use a thermometer and make sure it's working?

- Make sure that the thermometer is clean, dry and has been sanitised.
- Place the probe in the food and wait until the temperature reading has stabilised before reading the temperature.
- Measure the food at the thickest point, i.e. slowest heating or cooling point.
- Clean and sanitise the thermometer between measuring different foods, especially between raw and ready-to-eat foods.
- If using the thermometer to measure hot and cold foods, wait for the thermometer to return to room temperature.
- Measure different spots in the refrigerator as temperatures change within the fridge or cold display units.
- Measure the temperature of sealed packaged frozen/chilled foods by placing the probe thermometer between two packages.
- Maintain your thermometer to make sure it is working (e.g. replacing batteries) and that it is accurate to ±1°C by calibrating regularly.

More tips on how to clean, sanitise and calibrate a thermometer and information on temperature control requirements can be found at: www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/foodstandards

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