Safe Food Temperatures — Quick Reference Wall Chart

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SAFE MINIMUM INTERNAL COOKING TEMPERATURES (FDA Food Code 2022)

Food Item	Min. Temp	Hold Time	Notes
Poultry — whole, ground, stuffed (chicken, turkey, duck)	165°F / 74°C	Instantaneous	Highest priority — most common foodborne illness source
Stuffing cooked inside meat	165°F / 74°C	Instantaneous	Must reach 165°F even if inside a roast cooked to lower temp
Ground meat (beef, pork, veal, lamb)	155°F / 68°C	17 seconds	Ground allows pathogens from surface to migrate throughout
Injected meats / mechanically tenderized	155°F / 68°C	17 seconds	Same risk profile as ground — needles/blades carry surface bacteria inwar
Pork (whole muscle, roasts, chops)	145°F / 63°C	3 minutes (rest time)	Trichinae destroyed at 145°F with 3-minute rest
Beef / veal / lamb (whole muscle steaks, roasts)	145°F / 63°C	3 minutes (rest time)	Customer may request lower temp — follow your state's consumer advisory
Fish and shellfish	145°F / 63°C	15 seconds	Finfish must be opaque and flake easily at 145°F
Shell eggs (for immediate service)	145°F / 63°C	15 seconds	Cooked eggs for immediate service; pooled/prepped eggs = 155°F
Shell eggs (hot holding / batch cooking)	155°F / 68°C	17 seconds	Pooled eggs, eggs held before service
Roasts — beef / pork / veal / lamb	145°F / 63°C	3–4 min (roast-size dependent)	Use exact time-temp tables; 130°F acceptable with extended hold times
Game meats (farmed deer, bison, etc.)	145°F / 63°C	3 minutes	Wild-harvested game: verify local health dept. requirements
Fruit / vegetables (hot holding)	135°F / 57°C	—	Must be held at 135°F if cooked and held hot
RARE EXCEPTION: Consumer-requested undercooked	Per customer order	N/A	Only with written Consumer Advisory on menu; cannot serve to highly susc

COLD HOLDING, COOLING & REFRIGERATED STORAGE TEMPERATURES

Category	Temperature	Notes
Cold holding (TCS foods in service)	41°F / 5°C or below	All ready-to-eat TCS foods on a salad bar, sandwich station, etc.
Refrigerator storage	38–40°F / 3–4°C	Recommended range. Minimum: 41°F or below.
Freezer storage	0°F / -18°C or below	Prevents microbial growth. Does not kill pathogens.
Cooling: cooked TCS food (Step 1)	135°F → 70°F within 2 hours	Start cooling immediately after cooking/hot holding
Cooling: cooked TCS food (Step 2)	70°F → 41°F within 4 hours	Total cooling time: 135°F to 41°F within 6 hours total
Thawing (refrigerator method)	41°F / 5°C or below	Safest method — plan 24 hrs per 5 lbs of frozen product
Thawing (cold water method)	Running cold water ≤70°F	Submerged, continuous running water — cook immediately after
Thawing (microwave)	N/A	Only if cooking immediately after thawing
Thawing (as part of cooking)	N/A	Acceptable if product reaches minimum internal temp
Raw animal proteins — storage hierarchy	Top to bottom by cook temp	Ready-to-eat on top → fish → whole cuts → ground → poultry on bottom

HOT HOLDING, REHEATING & THE TEMPERATURE DANGER ZONE

Category	Temperature	Notes
Hot holding (TCS foods in service)	135°F / 57°C or above	Steam tables, warming trays, heat lamps must maintain 135°F+
TEMPERATURE DANGER ZONE	41°F – 135°F (5°C – 57°C)	Rapid bacterial growth. Minimize time in this range.

Category	Temperature	Notes
Maximum time in danger zone (total)	4 hours cumulative	Include all time from initial prep to service. Not 4 hrs at a stretch — cumulative.
Reheating for hot holding	165°F / 74°C within 2 hours	Must reach 165°F rapidly — cannot use steam table to reheat
Reheating commercially processed food	135°F / 57°C	Ready-to-eat commercially processed food only (e.g., canned soup reheated for s
Time/Temperature Control for Safety (TCS) foods	Require temp control	Meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, dairy, cooked plant food, cut melons, cut tomatoes,
Ready-to-Eat (RTE) foods date marking	4-day maximum	Prepared RTE TCS food held >24 hrs must be date-marked; discard after 7 days

SANITIZER CONCENTRATIONS — THREE-COMPARTMENT SINK & FOOD CONTACT SURFACES

Sanitizer Type	Concentration	Water Temp	Contact Time	Notes
Chlorine (bleach)	50–200 ppm	≥55°F / 13°C	≥7 seconds	Most common. Test with chlorine test strips. >200 ppm = toxic residue risk.
Quaternary ammonium (Quat)	200–400 ppm	≥75°F / 24°C	≥30 seconds	Requires warmer water. Test with Quat test strips. Effective on hard surfaces.
Iodine	12.5–25 ppm	≥68°F / 20°C	≥30 seconds	Less common. Amber/orange color indicates proper concentration.
Hot water sanitizing	≥171°F / 77°C	≥171°F	≥30 seconds	High-temp dishwasher final rinse. Verify with heat-sensitive tape or thermometer.
Three-compartment sink order	Wash → Rinse → Sanitize	Detergent → 110°F rinse → Sanitizer		Air dry only — do not towel dry sanitized items

Source: FDA Food Code 2022. Some states have adopted earlier versions of the Food Code — verify requirements with your state or local health department. Post this chart in your kitchen prep area.