

Guidelines for the Cooling and Thawing of Foods

Procedures for Cooling Potentially Hazardous Cooked Foods

Large food items take longer to cool because of the mass and volume from which heat must be removed. By reducing the volume of the food inside an individual container, the rate in which the food is cooled is dramatically increased, minimizing the opportunity for pathogen growth.

Quick cooling can be achieved by:

- Cutting large items into smaller pieces or smaller portions,
- Using a quick-chill unit, an ice bath, or frozen ice wands,
- Stirring or agitating food frequently as they cool, or
- Storing food in pre-chilled shallow pans and placing them on the upper shelves of the refrigerator, allowing them to cool and then covering them. **DO NOT** stack the pans so that cold air can freely circulate around them.

Note: Label and store the foods with the date and time they were prepared to indicate the expiration date/shelf life and when to discard.

Procedures for Thawing Potentially Hazardous Foods

Freezing prevents microbial growth in foods, but usually does not destroy all microorganisms. Improper thawing provides an opportunity for surviving bacteria to grow to harmful numbers and/or produce toxins. Bacteria will grow steadily on the surface of the thawing food even when there is remaining ice in the middle.

Things to keep in mind when thawing:

- Thaw food using one of the following methods:
 1. In the cooler
 2. In an ice bath
 3. Under cold, running water in the sink
 4. In a microwave oven, provided food is cooked immediately after.
- Do not thaw food at room temperature
- After proper thawing, maintain product temperature at or below 4°C before cooking or reheating.
- Reject incoming frozen food if it has been subjected to thawing prior to delivery.

For more information, please contact your nearest Environmental Public Health Services office.