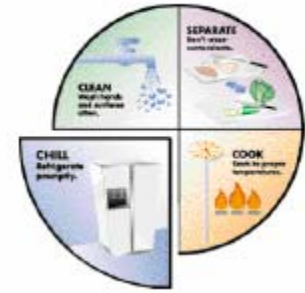




Refrigerate Promptly and Properly

According to both the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service, refrigeration at 40°F or below is one of the most effective ways to reduce risk of foodborne illness. Microorganisms grow more rapidly at warmer temperatures, and research shows that keeping a constant refrigerator temperature of 40°F or below helps slow growth of these harmful microbes.



The Cool Rules:

- Use This Tool To Keep It Cool.** Use a refrigerator thermometer to be sure the temperature is consistently 40°F or below.
- The Chill Factor.** Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared foods and leftovers within two hours of purchase or use. Always marinate foods in the refrigerator.
- The Thaw Law.** Never defrost food at room temperature. Thaw food in the refrigerator. For a quick thaw, submerge in cold water in an airtight package or thaw in the microwave if you will be cooking it immediately.
- Divide and Conquer.** Separate large amounts of leftovers into small, shallow containers for quicker cooling in the refrigerator.
- Avoid the Pack Attack.** Do not over-stuff the refrigerator. Cold air must circulate to keep food safe.
- Rotate Before It's Too Late.** Use or discard chilled foods as recommended in the USDA Cold Storage Chart found at <http://www.foodsafety.gov/~fsg/f01chart.html>.
- Don't Go Too Low.** As you approach 32°F ice crystals can begin to form and lower the quality of some foods such as raw fruits, vegetables and eggs. A refrigerator thermometer will help you determine whether you are too close to this zone.

'Fridge Quiz

Put your knowledge of proper refrigeration to the test.

- Should hot food be placed directly in the refrigerator? YES or NO
- Refrigeration prevents bacterial growth. TRUE or FALSE
- At what temperature should you set your refrigerator? ____ ° F

ANSWERS:

1. No, hot food should never be placed directly in the refrigerator. It can raise the temperature of the refrigerator and cause food to spoil.
2. True. Refrigeration slows down the growth of bacteria.
3. 40°F

Serve & Preserve



When serving cold food at a buffet, picnic, or barbecue, keep these "chilling" tips in mind.

- Cold foods should be kept at 40° F or colder.
- Keep all perishable foods chilled right up until serving time.
- Place containers of cold food on ice for serving to make sure they stay cold.
- It's particularly important to keep custards, cream pies, and cakes with whipped-cream or cream-cheese frostings refrigerated. Don't serve them if refrigeration is not possible.



The Big 'THAW'

Foods must remain at a safe temperature while thawing. Now is the perfect time to learn about the DOs and DON'Ts of defrosting.

Defrosting 'DOs'

- Defrost food in the refrigerator. This is the safest method for all foods.
- Short on time? Thaw meat and poultry in airtight packaging in cold water. Change the water every 30 minutes, so the food continues to thaw.
- Defrost food in the microwave *only* if it will be cooked immediately.
- You can thaw food as part of the cooking process, but make sure food reaches its safe internal temperature.

Defrosting 'DON'Ts'

- Avoid keeping foods in the Danger Zone — the unsafe temperatures between 40° F and 140° F.
- Don't defrost food in hot water.
- Don't thaw food on the counter. Food that's left out at room temperature longer than 2 hours is not within a safe temperature range and may not be safe to eat.

Hit the Road!



When traveling with food, be aware that time, temperature, and a cold source are key. Here are some tips to help keep your travels cool!

- Keep frozen foods in the refrigerator or freezer until you're ready to go.
- Always use ice or cold packs and fill your cooler with food. A full cooler will maintain its cold temperatures longer than one that is partially filled.
- When traveling, keep the cooler in the air-conditioned passenger compartment of your car, rather than in a hot trunk.
- If you've asked for a doggie bag to take home from a restaurant, it should be refrigerated within 2 hours of serving.



Did You Know?

Among consumers age 25-44 just 16% own a refrigerator thermometer.



FMI Trends, 2005



If you have questions or concerns about food safety, contact:

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Meat and Poultry Hotline at (888) 674-6854 or (202) 720-3333 (Washington, DC area). The TTY number for the hearing impaired is (800) 256-7072.
- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Food Information Line at (888) SAFE FOOD.
- The Fight BAC!™ Web site at: www.fightbac.org