



# Food Safety News



September is **Food Safety Education Month**, a great time to emphasize the importance of handwashing. Our hands touch multiple surfaces throughout the day and each touch is an opportunity for germs and bacteria to collect on our skin. Taking the time to properly wash your hands for the full 20 seconds before preparing or eating food is an important but easy way to stay food safe.

**Remember food safety is in your hands!**



**When should you wash your hands?**

- \* **Before, during, and after handling food**
- \* **Before eating at home or at a restaurant**
- \* **After using the restroom or changing a diaper**
- \* **After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing**
- \* **After handling animals, animal waste, or animal food**
- \* **After taking out the garbage**
- \* **Before and after caring for someone who is ill or touching an open wound**

# Is it done yet? You can't tell just by looking!

Use a food thermometer to check for the safe minimum internal temperature.



**145°F**



Beef, Pork, Veal & Lamb  
(Steaks, Roasts & Chops)

**145°F**

(with a 3-minute rest time)



Beef, Pork, Veal & Lamb  
(Ground)

**160°F**



**160°F**



Turkey, Chicken & Duck  
(Whole, Pieces & Ground)

**165°F**

Have more questions? Visit our website at [www.FSIS.USDA.gov](http://www.FSIS.USDA.gov)  
or contact the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854) or [MPHotline@usda.gov](mailto:MPHotline@usda.gov)

A food thermometer is a tool used to measure the internal temperature of food to ensure it is cooked safely and to the desired doneness. There are several types of food thermometers:

1. **Digital Instant-Read Thermometers:** These give a quick reading, usually within a few seconds, and are very accurate. They often have a probe that you insert into the food.
2. **Dial or Analog Thermometers:** These have a metal probe and a dial that displays the temperature. They generally take a bit longer to provide a reading compared to digital models.
3. **Thermocouples:** These are professional-grade instruments that measure temperature quickly and accurately, often used in restaurant kitchens.
4. **Oven-Proof Thermometers:** These can stay in the food while it cooks in the oven. They usually have a dial or digital display and are designed to be left in the food during cooking.
5. **Infrared Thermometers:** These measure the only the surface temperature of food because they do not make direct contact, these are not a good option for measuring for food safety.

Using a food thermometer is the only safe way to check for food *doneness*. Insert the stem of your probe thermometer into the middle of the food item or into the thickest part if not even in thickness. Remember to never let the thermometer touch the bottom or sides of the food container because it will not give an accurate reading. Also, don't forget to clean your thermometer with hot, soapy water before and after each use.

You will also need to learn how to ensure that your thermometer is calibrated correctly. The easiest way to do this is to fill a large cup or container with crushed ice and then add cool clean tap water until the container is full. Next stir the mixture and let sit for a few minutes. Now insert the probe into the ice water, again making sure not to touch the bottom or sides of the container. Once the reading has stabilized it should be 32° F or 0° C. If not follow the manufacturer's instructions for the thermometer and adjust the temperature until it reads correctly.

# Foodborne Illness Risk Factor: Hot and Cold Holding Temperatures



All Time/Temperature Control for Safety (TCS) Foods, except those prepared for immediate consumption, shall be maintained in such a fashion as to prevent the growth or development of bacteria. When holding foods for service, such as a buffet line, always remember to keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. Hot holding equipment must be able to keep foods at a temperature of 135°F or higher, and cold holding equipment must be capable of keeping foods at a temperature of 41°F or colder.

## HOT-HOLDING GUIDELINES:

- Stir the food at regular intervals, as it will help distribute heat evenly throughout the food
- Keep the food covered as coverings will help retain heat and eliminate potential contaminants from falling into the food.
- Use a food thermometer to measure the food's internal temperature every two hours.
- Discard any hot food after four hours if it has not been maintained at a temperature of 135°F or higher.

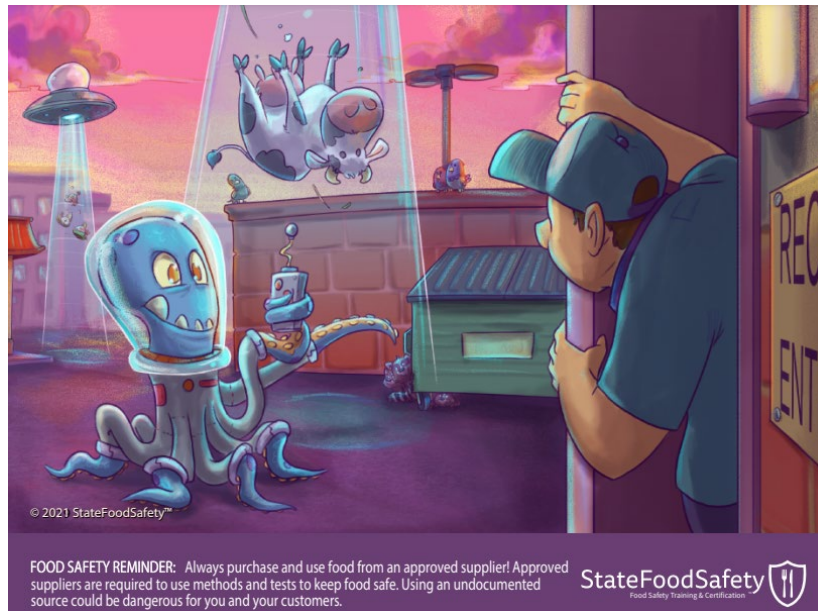
Other safety precautions regarding hot holding foods include never using hot holding equipment to reheat foods. Foods to be reheated must first be heated to an internal temperature of 165°F and then transferred to the hot holding equipment. Also, never mix freshly prepared food with foods being held for service as this practice can result in contaminated foods.

## COLD-HOLDING GUIDELINES:

- Protect all foods from possible contamination by covering them or using food shields.
- Use a food thermometer to measure the food's internal temperature every two hours, and take corrective action whenever the temperature of a cold food items goes above 41°F.
- Only certain unpackaged foods may be stored in direct contact with undrained ice (e.g. whole raw fruits and vegetables, raw poultry and fish received on ice may remain on ice throughout storage display, and preparation).
- Place a thermometer in your refrigerator or freezer to make sure your food is always 41 or below.

Whenever you are dealing with questionable hot and cold holding practices, always resolve the issue in favor of food safety. It is better to discard TCS foods than risk your customers' health and safety. One way to avoid discarding too much food is to prepare and cook only as much food as you will use in a short period of time. Other ideas are to use temp logs and calibrate your thermometers regularly.





### **What does the CDC mean by "unsafe sources"?**

While it may be tempting to cut costs by opting for cheaper suppliers, the potential risks of unsafe sources should not be underestimated. A large-scale and costly foodborne illness outbreak could be the result if your local regulatory authority or FDA does not approve suppliers. Unsafe sources encompass a range of suppliers who do not adhere to proper precautions and maintain appropriate records when handling food or ingredients. The consequences of such outbreaks can be severe, both in terms of public health and the reputation of your business.

Any supplier that your local regulatory authority has not approved may be unsafe. Such suppliers could include food made in a home kitchen and produce or animals grown or caught in a home environment. In addition, you should be cautious when purchasing food from roadside vendors, farmer's markets, and local farmers. Although these sources can be good for those who cook in their home, they are not ideal for a restaurant or food facility unless your local authority approves them before purchasing food.

The FDA and USDA play a crucial role in the food industry, working closely with suppliers to ensure they are following steps to mitigate the risk of foodborne illness. Their oversight and the requirement for approved suppliers to maintain documentation provide an additional layer of safety and confidence, reassuring both you and your customers.

### **How can you identify safe sources for food/make sure food comes from a safe source?**

When identifying if a food supplier is approved, you should check on a few qualifiers, like what their food safety standards are, how they transport food (i.e., do they use a refrigerated or freezer truck for foods that need it, where is food stored if traveling a long way, etc.), and what would happen if there was a problem or recall. They may also meet specific standards or have other credentials to prove they are a reputable supplier.

If a manufacturer uses a certain amount of meat or animal products, they must work with the USDA, perform certain inspections, and keep those records. Many unapproved sources may not perform these tests or keep records, so you must know your meat supplier is approved.

When there is a food recall, your supplier's records and yours can help determine if you have the contaminated food in your facility. Most recalls occur because of undeclared allergens or contamination from physical, biological, or chemical hazards. Going through the correct supply chains will help you know if you need to store or take special precautions when using ingredients. It's important to follow the manufacturer's instructions if you are ever involved in a recall, as they provide guidance and support during such challenging times.

**By following these guidelines, you can take proactive steps to ensure the safety of both yourself and your customers. This sense of responsibility and empowerment is key in the food industry, where safety should always be a top priority.**



**CITY OF BAYTOWN**

HEALTH DEPARTMENT  
Community Service, Clean Team, Environmental Health, Mosquito Control,  
Neighborhood Protection, and Animal Services

# CONTAMINATED EQUIPMENT

Ensuring that equipment is clean and sanitized is crucial in maintaining food safety and preventing contamination.

## Improper Cleaning and Sanitizing:

Failing to clean equipment thoroughly between uses can leave behind food particles and microorganisms.

Sanitizing surfaces without first cleaning them may not effectively reduce microbial levels.

## Cross-Contamination:

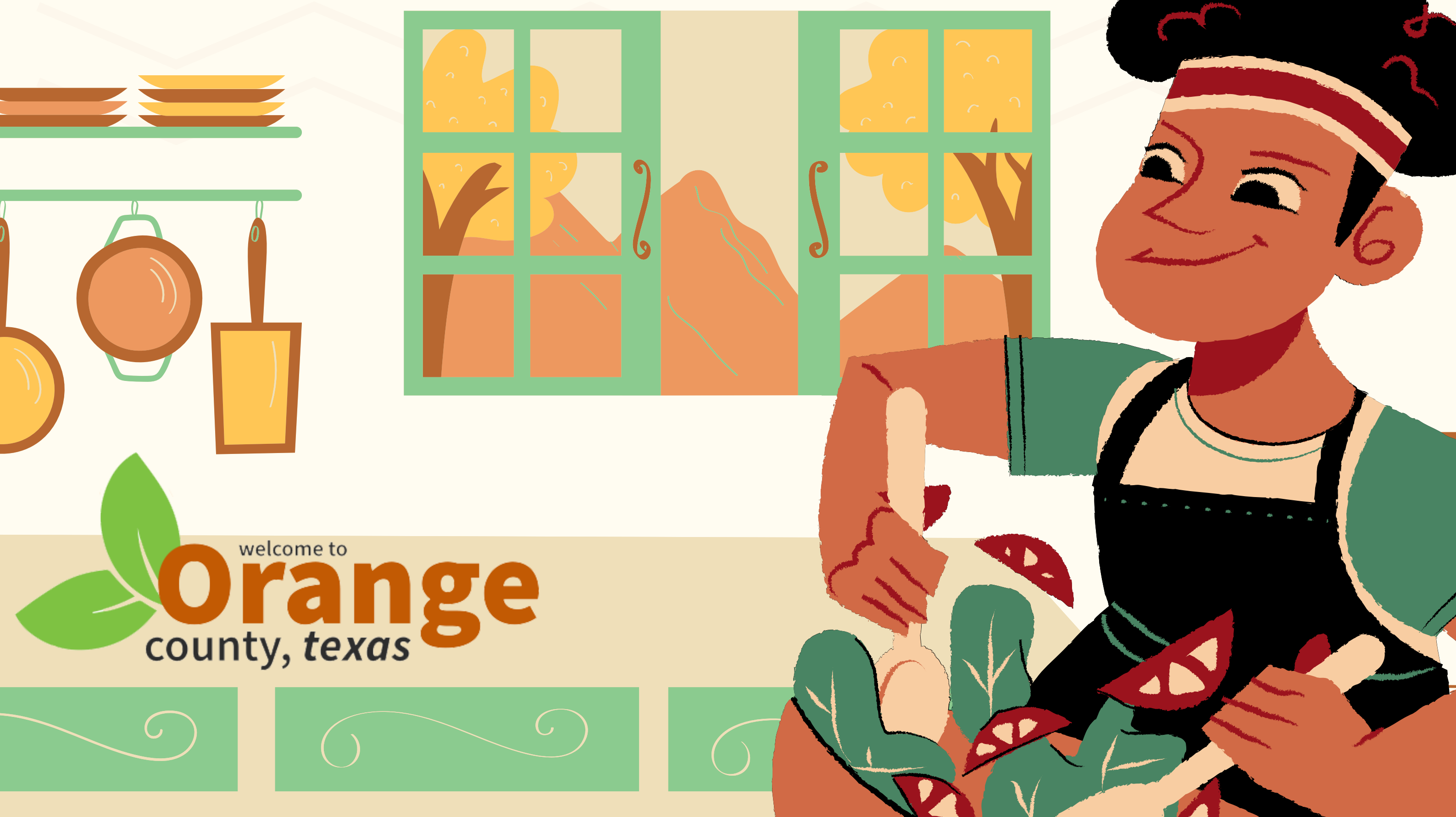
Using the same utensils or equipment for raw and cooked foods without proper cleaning in between can lead to contamination.

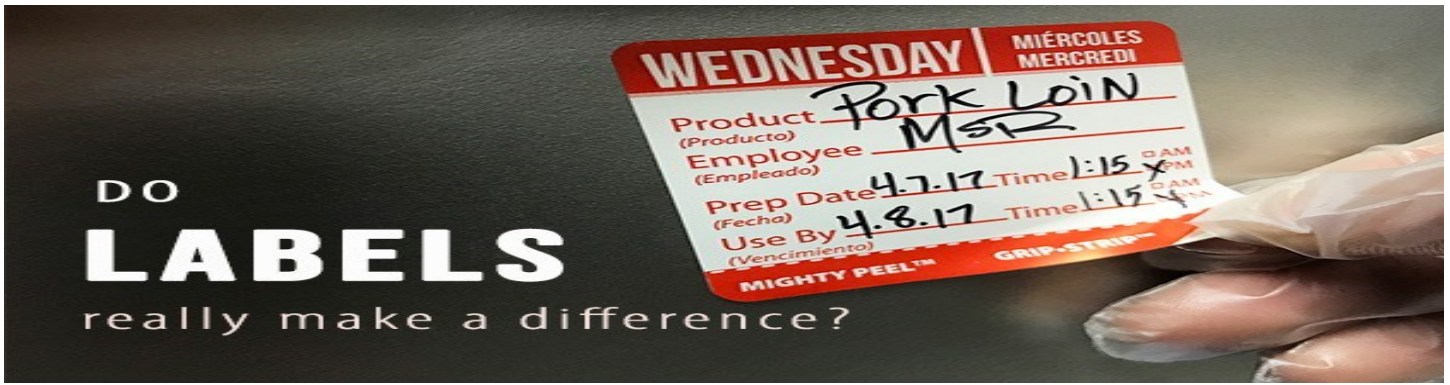
## Poor Maintenance:

Equipment in disrepair, such as cracked surfaces, worn seals, or malfunctioning parts, can harbor bacteria and other contaminants.

## Improper Handling:

Food handlers not following proper hygiene practices can transfer contaminants to equipment and food.





It may seem obvious, but one of the most crucial and time-saving tasks to run a more organized and efficient commercial kitchen is learning how to label food with food rotation labels. Food rotation labels allow you to identify food products quickly and set up a storage system that helps to keep counters from being cluttered and food properly labeled. It is also an [FDA requirement](#) that you maintain accurate labeling of your food in your kitchen. Learning how to label food correctly is a practice that will have long term benefits for your commercial kitchen as well as for your restaurant patrons.

## Why is Labeling Food so Important? Does it Really Make a Difference?

You may think of food rotation labels as an afterthought. Why put a label on something I can simply identify by looking at it? But the advantages of using food rotation labels go far beyond just being able to identify which storage bin has potatoes and which bin has lettuce. They provide many more uses to help you run a safe, clean and efficient commercial kitchen.

## Safety First

Labeling food in a commercial kitchen minimizes foodborne illness. By placing food rotation labels on your storage bins you can easily label the type of food in the storage container, the date it was added to the storage bin, and the date the food will expire. All **time and temperature controlled foods** require these three key pieces of information: **Type of food, Date food was added, Date food expires** Food that is served after the use by, or expiration date, could cause food-related illness to your restaurant patrons.

## Organization

Labeling your food is also crucial to maintaining a well-organized pantry. By labeling items with food rotation labels, you can make sure all your vegetable labeled storage bins are close to one another; same with fruits, meats, and other similarly labeled products. This helps prevent cross-contamination of different foods, which can prevent foodborne illness. Keeping fruits and vegetables away from raw meat helps ensure that diseases like salmonella, which can be found on raw chicken, don't end up on your vegetables.



## What Information Should I Include on a Food Rotation Label?

While step one is adding [colored food rotation labels](#) to your food storage bins, step two is making sure the information you write on the label is useful for how you want to organize and run your commercial kitchen. There are different types of food rotation labels, so choosing the one that best suits your needs is important.