

# Basic Food Safety Tips for Food Service Personnel

Mississippi has about 16,600 commercial food service operations. If one-third to one-half of all meals consumed are purchased at the food service establishments, Mississippians will be eating an estimated 2.4 to 3.7 million meals outside their homes each year. Who will make sure this food is not only good tasting but also safe and wholesome?

As a commercial food handler, you have the responsibility to ensure the safety and quality of the foods and drinks served by your food service. It literally is in your hands to know and practice some basic guidelines to protect yourself, your coworkers, and your customers from foodborne illness.

- ▶ Practice good personal health habits. Wash your hands before handling any food. Wash hands often before and after handling foods. Wash hands with warm, running water and soap, and scrub for at least 20 seconds. Use a single-use paper towel to dry your hands.
- ▶ Obtain foods from approved sources (e.g., licensed or certified food processors or vendors who sell government-inspected foods). Take time to inspect these foods at receiving and before preparation for cooking and serving.
- ▶ Avoid cross-contamination from raw foods to cooked and ready-to-eat foods. In the refrigerator, keep raw foods that may drip or leak stored below ready-to-eat or already cooked menu items. Clean and sanitize cutting boards, meat slicers, can openers, and other equipment after using.
- ▶ Use and take care of food thermometers. Wash, rinse, and sanitize your food thermometer before and after using it in food. Take temperatures in the center of the thickest part of the food. Always adjust or calibrate the thermometer as needed for accurate measurement. Follow the recommendations of the manufacturer of your thermometer.

- ▶ Hold potentially hazardous foods (e.g., meat, poultry, fish, whole eggs, milk, heat-treated vegetables) at temperatures of 40°F or lower during storage and at 140°F or higher during preparation, as well as after, when holding for service.
- ▶ Quickly chill cooked foods in shallow pans in a refrigerator, in a quick-chilling unit, or in an ice water bath. Stir or mix foods often during chilling. Cover and refrigerate or freeze after cooling cooked foods.
- ▶ Heat unserved foods to an internal temperature of 165°F or higher within 2 hours. Reheat only one time.
- ▶ Clean and sanitize food-contact surfaces (such as counter tops, cutting boards, utensils, and equipment) after each use. One sanitizing mixture is 1 tablespoon chlorine bleach for every 2 gallons of water.
- ▶ Throw away high protein, moist foods (e.g., meat, fish, shellfish, poultry, whole eggs, milk or its products, cooked beans, tofu) after 2 hours or more in the Danger Zone, which is from 40°F to 140°F.
- ▶ Cook or heat foods to recommended temperatures. USDA recommendations are listed below.

## USDA Recommended Food Temperatures

Food Item	Temperature (°F)
Ground meat, pork, or beef	160
Whole cuts of beef	145
Poultry (whole and breasts/roasts)	165
Ham	145 (with a 3-minute rest time*)
Fish	145
Eggs (whole)	Cook until yolk and white are firm; 165 for immediate service 155 for hot-holding

\*Rest time is the amount of time the product remains at the final temperature after it has been removed from the grill, oven, or other heat source. During the 3 minutes after meat is removed from the heat source, its temperature remains constant or continues to rise, which destroys harmful bacteria.

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