

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Spring 2012 (Mar./Apr./May)

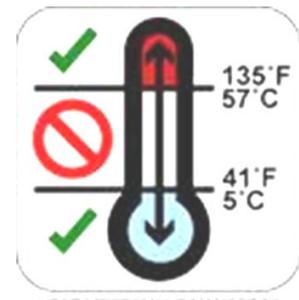


### The Food Temperature Danger Zone

It is believed that avoiding spoiled food is a simple task, right? If the rotting smell doesn't send you running, it's usually the change in color or the furriness growing on the food that raises a red flag letting you know that this food has gone awry.

However, with harmful bacteria, such as Salmonella and E. coli, it is a completely different story. When these bacteria contaminate food, they do so with extreme force, and they do it without showing any physical signs, smells, or tastes whatsoever. So, in order to prevent ourselves and others from getting sick we have to resort to other measures.

One simple approach is to kill these tiny but harmful bacteria. In your head you might be thinking "How do we do that?" Well, temperatures hotter than 165°F kill most bacteria within a few seconds. But to do the job, it's a food's internal temperature that has to reach 165°F, not just the outside. Heating up foods to this temperature will kill most pathogens and render your food safe to eat.



Another effective method in preventing illness from eating food is to prevent bacteria from growing. Bacteria won't multiply in the colder temperatures of a refrigerator or freezer, or at temperatures hotter than 135°F. Where they thrive is between 41°F and 140°F, a region known as the "Food Temperature Danger Zone."

To substantially reduce the chances of contracting, or passing along, a food-borne illness, make sure that your perishable foods never spend more than an hour in the Food Temperature Danger Zone. We do that by controlling the food's temperature during every stage of storage and preparation. By following these simple rules of keeping food either cold or hot, and staying away from that 41° F to 135° F Danger Zone, you can defeat and control Salmonella and E Coli.

Below is a table showing the key temperatures of the Food Temperature Danger Zone:

165°F and higher:	Most bacteria die within several seconds
136°F to 164°F:	Holding hot foods and sauces. Bacteria aren't killed, but they don't multiply, either.
<b>41°F to 135°F: Food Temperature Danger Zone</b>	Bacteria thrive and multiply. Limit exposure of perishable foods to one hour or less
33°F to 39°F:	Refrigerated food storage. Bacteria aren't killed. They multiply, but relatively slowly. Food is safe here for a limited time.
32°F and lower:	Frozen food storage: Bacteria aren't killed, but they don't multiply, either.

Fausto Garcia, Jr.

REHS

### How and When to Wash One's Hands

At first glance, this might seem like a redundant topic, but its importance is not one to be overlooked. Upon conducting inspections, there are countless times that I neglect to see anyone wash their hands during the entire time I am there. There are many different times that one should wash their hands while working in a food establishment. A few of the most common times would be:



- After using the bathroom
- Anytime gloves are changed
- Anytime you touch your face
- Anytime you touch anything unsanitary (not that your face is unsanitary)
- About every 20 minutes



When washing your hands, it's also important to do it the proper way. It should be 20 seconds of vigorous lathering, with soap and hot water. Hot water is important because it is the temperature which kills the germs, not the soap. The soap merely acts as a lubricant, helping to remove the debris, while the hot water helps kill bacteria. Antibacterial soap works better than normal soap, but studies have shown that it does not kill as much germs as you would think. Iodine is the strongest germ-killer, but unless you want your hands stained bluish purple, you probably won't be using too much iodine.

When you dry your hands, it's important to use paper towels, and not a common towel, since a common towel collects everyone's dirty hand leftovers. If you're in the bathroom, you should use the paper towel to open the door before throwing it away to prevent the further spread of germs. So hopefully, this will help you become more aware of what to do when washing your hands. Ciao.

Chris Cantisano  
REHS

### OPEN DOORS AND WINDOWS



Many food establishments have been noted leaving their doors and windows open to the outer air and failing to keep their screen doors closed, if they even have a screen door. These are doors and windows leading to the exterior environment whether they are the front, side, or back doors and windows.

Chapter 24 of the New Jersey State Sanitary Code, 8:24 – 6.2(n) is very clear regarding this issue. The following are requirements from this State Code for the protection of outer openings:

N): "Outer openings of a retail food establishment shall be protected against the entry of insects and rodents by:

- Filling or closing holes and other gaps along floors, wall, and ceilings;
- Closed, tight-fitting windows; and
- Solid, self-closing, tight-fitting doors."



All openings to the outer air shall be effectively protected against the entrance of insects and rodents by using self-closing doors, closed windows, screening, controlled air currents, or other effective means. Screen doors shall be self-closing; and screens for windows, doors, skylights, and other openings to the outer air shall be tight fitting and FREE OF BREAKS OR TEARS.

There will be a **ZERO TOLERANCE** policy about this issue as we have been emphasizing this for years. All food establishments are expected to comply. **Inspectors will issue signed notices of violation, and repeat offenders will be issued summonses for non-compliance.**

Pests such as insects and rodents can pose serious problems for establishments. Not only are they unsightly to customers, they also damage food, supplies, and facilities. The greatest danger from pests comes from their ability to spread disease, including food-borne illnesses. Preventing insects from entering your establishment is probably the least expensive, as well as the safest, method of insect control.

If you can prevent insects from entering your establishment, you will reduce the need to use pesticides, which not only helps the environment, but reduces safety hazards to employees. A prevention program for insect control is far better than an expensive elimination program. It should include a complete sanitation and employee hygiene program, and proper maintenance and upkeep of the food establishment.

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