



DID YOU KNOW?

Among consumers ages 25 to 44, 16 percent report they own a refrigerator thermometer. The best way to make sure your refrigerator is at 40° F is to use a refrigerator thermometer.

– FMI Trends, 2005



BAC Down! Refrigerate Promptly and Properly

According to both the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s 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.



BUY SOME PEACE OF MIND:
Refrigerator thermometers are available at grocery, hardware and discount stores.

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. If you will cook food immediately, for a quick thaw, defrost in the microwave or enclose the food in an airtight package and submerge it in cold water.

Divide and Conquer

Separate large amounts of leftovers into shallow containers for quicker cooling in the refrigerator.

Avoid the Pack Attack

Do not overstuff 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 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 foods such as raw fruits, vegetables and eggs. A refrigerator thermometer will help you determine whether you are too close to this temperature.



Always refrigerate or freeze meat, poultry, eggs, and other perishables as soon as you get them home from the store. Never let raw meat, poultry, eggs, cooked food, or cut fresh fruits and vegetables sit at room temperature more than two hours before putting them in the refrigerator or freezer. Reduce that to one hour when the temperature is above 90° 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 below.
- 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.



Hit the Road Cold!

When traveling with food, be aware that time, temperature and a cold source are key.

- 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.
- If you’ve asked for a doggie bag to take home leftovers from a restaurant, it should be refrigerated within two hours of serving.

The Big Thaw

There are three safe ways to defrost food: in the refrigerator, in cold water, and in the microwave.

DEFROSTING DO’S

- 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 if it will be used immediately. Change the water every 30 minutes, so the food continues to thaw in cool water.
- Defrost food in the microwave only if you are going to cook it immediately.

DEFROSTING DON’TS

- Never defrost food at room temperature. Food left out at room temperature longer than two hours may enter the Danger Zone—the unsafe temperatures between 40° F and 140° F. Bacteria can multiply rapidly between 40° F and 140° F.
- Don’t defrost food in hot water.



- If you have questions or concerns about food safety, contact:
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854). TTY 1-800-256-7072.
- The Fight BAC!® Web site at www.fightbac.org.
- Gateway to Government Food Safety Information at www.foodsafety.gov.

The Partnership for Food Safety, a non-profit organization, is creator and steward of the Fight BAC!® food safety education program developed using scientifically based recommendations resulting from an extensive consumer research process.