

## Thawing and Cooling Foods Safely

Harmful microorganisms that cause foodborne illness can grow in potentially hazardous foods, especially when the food is left in the temperature danger zone, 4°C to 60°C. Potentially hazardous foods include foods like meat, fish, poultry, dairy products, eggs, and cooked cereals and vegetables. Thawing and cooling potentially hazardous foods safely ensures that harmful microorganisms cannot grow a lot and make people sick.

### *How to Thaw Potentially Hazardous Foods*

Do not thaw food at room temperature or in hot water. Harmful microorganisms will grow on the surface of the thawing food, even if the food is still frozen in the middle.

Thaw foods safely by:

- Placing in the fridge. Store raw meats below any ready-to-eat foods, like fruits and vegetables.
- Placing under cold, running water in the sink.
- Using a microwave oven. Cook foods immediately after thawing.
- Cooking foods from frozen. For example, add frozen vegetables to soup that is cooking.

After proper thawing, except when thawing with a microwave oven, keep food in the fridge (4°C or colder) before cooking or reheating.

### *How to Cool Potentially Hazardous Foods*

Cooling foods slowly from hot holding temperatures (60°C and above) to fridge temperatures (0°C to 4°C) allows harmful microorganisms to grow. Always cool foods as quickly as possible; foods must cool to 20°C within 2 hours, and then to 4°C within another 4 hours.

Cool foods safely by:

- Dividing food into smaller portions or pieces. Large food items take longer to cool.
- Using a quick-chill unit, an ice water bath, or stirring with a frozen ice wand.
- Storing food in pre-chilled shallow pans and placing them on the upper shelves of the fridge. Cover the pans after the food has cooled. Do not stack the pans, so that cold air can move freely around them.



Soup in an ice water bath with an ice wand.

After proper cooling, label and store the food with the date and time they were prepared. Discard food that is not eaten within three or four days.

*For more information, please contact your nearest Environmental Public Health office.*

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