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Would Your Kitchen Pass a Food Safety Inspection? (Part 1 of 2)

Alice Henneman, MS, RDN
Extension Educator

Restaurants must pass regular food safety inspections to stay open. Would YOUR kitchen pass a food safety inspection?

In the United States, the "Food Code" — developed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) — serves as a model to help health jurisdictions nationwide develop food service food safety standards.

For consumers, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Centers for Disease Control Prevention (CDC) and FDA work together to provide food safety guidelines for use in the home. **NOTE: Consumer guidelines sometimes differ slightly from restaurant guidelines due to such factors as differences in home and professional equipment.**



DIRECTIONS: With these guidelines in mind, let's see if your kitchen would measure up! Choose the answers that most closely apply to YOUR everyday practices in your kitchen. Then compare your answers with the desired practices according to government guidelines for consumers.

1. How long do you leave perishable foods at room temperature? (Examples include meat, poultry, seafood, dairy products and cooked leftovers.)

- a) 2 or less hours
- b) No more than 6 hours
- c) I haven't paid attention to how much time they are at room temperature

2. What is the temperature of your home refrigerator?

- a) 50°F
- b) 40°F or below
- c) I don't know

3. How many days do you usually store perishable leftovers in the refrigerator?

- a) 3 to 4 days
- b) A week or more
- c) My leftovers usually spoil before I get around to eating them

4. How do you determine whether you have cooked meat, poultry and seafood to a safe temperature?

- a) Cut into it to see if the juices run clear

- b) Check if it is no longer pink in the middle
- c) Use a food thermometer

Answers to Food Safety Inspection Questions

1. a) Two or less hours:

Illness-causing bacteria can grow in perishable foods within two hours unless refrigerated — and within one hour if the temperature is 90°F or higher. Divide leftovers into clean, shallow containers so they chill faster and refrigerate within two hours. Refrigerate within one hour when the temperature is 90°F or above.

2. b) 40°F or below:

Your refrigerator should be between 40°F and 32°F. Your freezer should be at 0°F. Use an appliance thermometer to assure your refrigerator and freezer are cold enough. **NOTE:** Freezing doesn't destroy bacteria but keeps them from growing in food products until you cook the food. Quality should remain high for most frozen foods for 3–6 months.

For specific food items and to learn if they might stay fresh longer, see the FoodKeeper app developed by USDA, Cornell University and the Food Marketing Institute: www.foodsafety.gov/keep/foodkeeperapp. Access the app through your web browser; it is also available as a mobile application for Android and Apple devices.

While the quality of food decreases the longer food is in a freezer, it will be safe indefinitely when stored at 0°F.

3. a) 3 to 4 days: Use refrigerated, perishable leftovers within 3 to 4 days or freeze them in airtight freezer-quality packaging or storage containers. Frozen leftovers are at best quality for about 3 to 4 months; however, they will be safe indefinitely at 0°F.

4. c) Use a food thermometer:

You can't tell whether meat, poultry or seafood is safely cooked by looking at it. They can be pink even when they have reached a safe internal temperature. You can't count on a food being at a desirable end temperature when the juices run clear; for example, a turkey may be overcooked by the time the juices run clear. USDA recommends these temperatures:

Product	Minimum Internal Temperature
Beef, pork, veal & lamb (steaks, chops, roasts)	145°F (62.8 °C) and allow to rest for at least 3 minutes
Ground meats	160°F (71.1 °C)
All poultry (breasts, whole bird, legs, thighs, wings, ground poultry, and stuffing)	165°F (73.9 °C)
Fish & shellfish	145°F (62.8 °C)

References and for further information:

- *Check Your Steps*, retrieved 4/30/2017 at www.foodsafety.gov/keep/basics
- *Chill: Refrigerate Promptly*, retrieved 4/30/2017 at www.foodsafety.gov/keep/basics/chill/index.html
- *Cook: Cook to the Right Temperature*, retrieved 4/30/2017 at www.foodsafety.gov/keep/basics/cook/index.html
- *FDA Food Code*, retrieved 4/30/2017 at www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/RetailFoodProtection/FoodCode
- *Leftovers and Food Safety*, retrieved 4/30/2017 at www.fsis.usda.gov/shared/PDF/Leftovers_and_Food_Safety.pdf
- *Safe Minimum Internal Temperature Chart*, retrieved 4/30/2017 at www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/safe-food-handling/safe-minimum-internal-temperature-chart/ct_index

HEALTHY EATING

ENJOY NEBRASKA FOODS!

Alice Henneman, MS, RDN, Extension Educator

CREAM SOUP TOPPINGS

It's like winning a Trifecta when one recipe idea adds color, taste and helps use up leftovers. The next time you serve a cream soup, check your refrigerator for those last odds and ends of food you might serve as "add-in's" for your soup. For this cream of corn soup, I set out small dishes of optional add-ins from my refrigerator: chopped tomatoes, pepper strips, and cubed cheese. Similar foods should work well in other cream soups such as cream of potato, cream of broccoli, cream of mushroom and cream of chicken soup.