

Food Safety



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Summer is Approaching, Are Your Customers Safe?

The Temperature Danger Zone is between 5°C and 60°C and for those that don't know, bacteria grow very quickly in this "zone". Some bacteria grow so quickly that they double in number every 20 minutes. That means that in only seven hours, you can go from one bacterium, to more than 2,000,000. (1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128 etc.).

Pretty scary stuff, especially as the bacteria's that cause food poisoning don't have any smell, taste or obvious visual signs.

The only way you can be sure is to make certain that you control the two measurables detailed above. For high risk foods (meat, dairy, fish, eggs, cooked rice etc.) you need to either make sure that they are stored below 5°C or you need to control the time (so that the bacteria don't double).

Food Standards Australia New Zealand have a guideline called the 2 hour / 4 hour rule to control the time that potentially hazardous (high risk) foods are out of temperature control. There are many things that we do in our kitchens that mean that we have food above 5°C or below 60°C.

What food preparation and display do you do that allows food to enter the Temperature Danger Zone? Did you think of:

- Sandwiches
- Canapés/ finger food
- Dips
- Buffets
- Cheese platters
- Mise en place for a la carte
- Salads
- Portioning/slicing cold roast meats and small goods

- Desserts
- Pre-plating up large functions
- Mincing meat

For all of these methods of food preparation, we need to control the time that the food is out of the fridge, to prevent the bacteria that may be present in low numbers growing to dangerous levels. This is especially important during the hotter months, as the ambient temperature is much higher, and because of the heat, we tend to eat less HOT food, and eat more chilled food (salads, sandwiches etc.).

FSANZ's 2 hour / 4 hour rule is pretty simple. For food that has been in the danger zone, it goes like this:

- Less than 2 hours – Eat, cook, put back into fridge, continue to work etc.
- More than 2 hours – Eat immediately or throw away (Do not put it back into the fridge)
- More than 4 hours – Must throw away.

What some people forget about this rule, is that the time indicated above is accumulative, so if you take some ham out of the fridge for an hour, and then put it back, next time you can only pull it out for another hour (not 2 hours)

Now I believe I can guess what you are thinking... "I have eaten food that has been in the danger zone for → 4 hours and I am still here". That may be the case, but remember what I said earlier? You cannot tell if food has become contaminated without looking at it under a microscope. Food poisoning bacteria do not have any obvious signs. This rule is based

on a worse case scenario, and is designed to protect you and your customers. So in future, leave the high risk foods in the fridge as long as possible. If you need to take them out of the fridge, only take small amounts out, and once you have finished, put it back into the fridge as soon as possible.

Check out the FSANZ Fact Sheet below, for more temperature control advice. Over summer, you can never be too safe!

Until next edition,
Eat well. Eat safe!

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Links:
FSANZ Temperature Control Fact Sheet:
http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/_srcfiles/CharityFS_Temperature_Control_July07.pdf

WIN!

Question of the Month

Do you have anything you'd like to know about? The next Question of the Month will be awarded a probe thermometer valued at \$60.00.

Email your questions to Gavin at: gavin@australianfoodsafety.com.au and be sure to mention Food 4 Thought for your chance to learn AND win!