

# Handling Take-Out Foods Safely

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Take-out and delivered foods have become routine and often necessary in today's busy world. However, take-out foods that are transported need time and temperature control to avoid foodborne illness. Following safe handling procedures will help keep your take-out food safe to eat.

Bacteria grow rapidly between 40 °F and 140 °F. It's best to keep food out of this "Temperature Danger Zone."

## Handling hot take-out or delivered food safely

- Keep cooked hot food at an internal temperature of 140 °F or above.
- Use a food thermometer to monitor the internal temperature of food.
- Divide leftovers into smaller portions, and place into shallow containers in the refrigerator.

## Handling cold or refrigerated take-out or delivered food safely

- Keep cold foods at 40 °F or below.
- Refrigerate perishable food within two hours after purchase or delivery.
- If perishable food is out in air temperatures above 90 °F, refrigerate within one hour.
- Pack cold food in a covered cooler with plenty of ice or frozen gel packs.

## Thawing meals safely

- Thaw wrapped, cooked meat or poultry in the refrigerator.
- Allow 24 hours for every 5 pounds of meat or poultry.
- Eat cooked meat or poultry within 3 to 4 days.
- Eat thawed meals cold or reheated.

Note that you may place frozen food directly into the oven without thawing.



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### Reheating meals safely

- Always reheat meat and poultry to an internal temperature of at least 165 °F.
- Use a food thermometer to check internal temperature.
- If reheating in the oven, set oven temperature to no lower than 325 °F.
- Do not reheat meals in a slow cooker.
- Cover and rotate food for even heating when using a microwave.

### Reference

USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service. (2013, June). *Safe handling of take-out foods*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from [http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/safe-food-handling/safe-handling-of-take-out-foods/CT\\_Index](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/safe-food-handling/safe-handling-of-take-out-foods/CT_Index)

WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!

Find out more about Michigan Food Safety at

[www.msue.msu.edu/safefood](http://www.msue.msu.edu/safefood).

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