

Keeping Foods Out of the Temperature Danger Zone

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Keeping perishable foods safe means keeping them out of the “Temperature Danger Zone.” This danger zone is the range of temperatures between 40 °F and 140 °F, which has been shown to promote and encourage the growth of bacteria in perishable foods. When perishable foods are in that temperature range, bacteria growth can occur. Bacterial growth can lead to foodborne illness. In order to keep perishable foods safe, store them at temperatures below or above the danger zone:

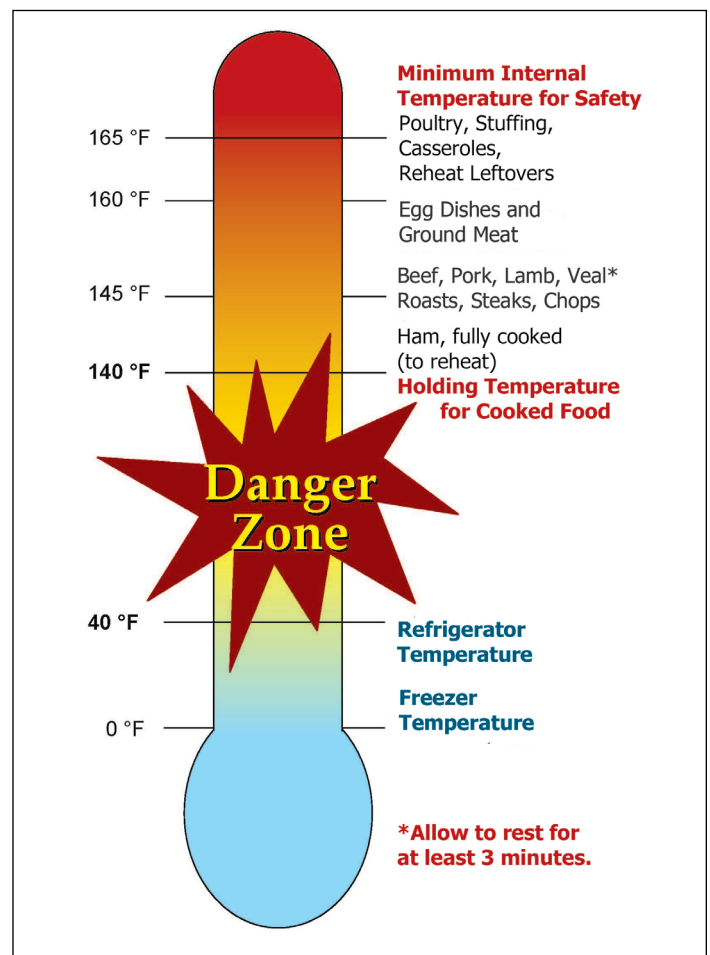
Follow these tips to keep food out of the danger zone:

- Store cold perishable foods at or below 40 °F in the refrigerator or in a cooler with ice.
- Store hot perishable foods at or above 140 °F in hot-holding equipment such as roasters, slow cookers and chafing dishes.
- Use a refrigerator thermometer in your refrigerator to make sure the temperature is at or below 40 °F.
- Use food thermometers when keeping foods hot to make sure they stay at or above 140 °F.
- Discard foods that have been left out at room temperature for two hours or longer or one hour if the temperature where the food is being served is 90 °F or above.

This thermometer (Figure 1) shows the minimum internal temperature that all perishables foods such as meat and eggs should be held at to keep bacteria from contaminating food. It illustrates that any

food with an internal temperature of 40 °F to 140 °F is in the temperature danger zone. Refrigerator temperature should be at or below 40 °F and freezer temperature should be zero degrees.

Figure 1. Danger Zone Thermometer.



Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

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Reference

USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service. (2011, October). *Danger zone (40 °F - 140 °F)*. (Rev. ed.). Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from www.fsis.usda.gov/shared/PDF/Danger_Zone.pdf

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