

Food Safety 101

Hands, storage, and a date dot that makes sense

The full handwash

Wet. Soap. Scrub. Rinse. Dry.

Use the handwashing sink and clean, running warm water. Clean hands and exposed arms, including fingertips, under nails, and between fingers.

At least 20 seconds total. Rub vigorously for 10-15 seconds. Dry with a paper towel or approved hand dryer. Hand sanitizer does not replace washing.

A new task may need a reset

Wash before food work and putting on gloves for a food task. Wash after the restroom, raw food, dirty dishes, or activities that contaminate hands. Change soiled or damaged gloves and between tasks. Never wash or reuse single-use gloves. Use a clean utensil or barrier for ready-to-eat food.

Feeling sick?

Report vomiting, diarrhea, yellow skin or eyes, sore throat with fever, and open or draining infected wounds. Also report diagnosed foodborne illness and exposures covered by the illness policy.

Call before the shift. Do not clear yourself to return.

A safer storage spot

Protect ready-to-eat food above raw food. Separate different raw foods using the restaurant's shelf plan. Keep raw chicken in a leakproof container below the ready-to-eat food.

Keep food covered or otherwise protected, identified, generally 6 inches off the floor, and away from chemicals.

Who needs a date mark?

Qualifying food is **ready-to-eat, needs temperature control for safety, and is refrigerated more than 24 hours**. Examples: cooked chicken and cooked rice. At **41 F or below: maximum 7 days**. Preparation or opening day is **Day 1**. Use a shorter applicable limit. Not every food gets seven days.

A filled example

FOOD	Cooked chicken
PREPARED	09/14/2026
DISCARD	09/20/2026
BY	JM

Safely prepared and cooled; continuously held at 41 F or below; no shorter limit. This is a sample house label. Label fields and colors vary.

Your turn: cooked rice

Safely prepared and cooled September 16, 2026. Held at 41 F or below for more than 24 hours. No shorter limit. Complete the label using the house format.

FOOD _____

PREPARED _____

DISCARD _____

BY _____

New container, same applicable date. Mixed ingredients keep the earliest applicable date. Discard qualifying food with a missing required date mark; never guess a fresh date.

Food Safety 101

Temperature checks, allergy orders, and cleanup

Two normal holding limits

Cold: 41 F or below.

Hot: 135 F or above.

For normal holding of TCS food: food that needs time and temperature control for safety. Ask the manager about any exception.

Cooking has a different job

Raw chicken: all parts reach 165 F (instantaneous under the model Code). Other foods and reheating tasks have different requirements. Follow the correct procedure.

Use a clean, sanitized food probe suited to the food. Wait for a stable reading. Check multiple spots when needed.

The usual cooling process

135 F to 70 F within 2 hours.

135 F to 41 F or below within 6 hours total.

Use the restaurant's effective cooling process: shallow pans, smaller portions, an ice-water bath with stirring, or other effective methods. Measure and record.

An unknown history

Warm cooked food with an unverifiable safe history stays out of service. Tell the manager. Discard when safety cannot be established. Do not taste it, invent a start time, or assume reheating fixes it.

Allergy orders: check first

Use the guest's exact allergen. Check the current ingredient labels, complete recipe, and preparation process with the manager. Do not guess, pick an ingredient off a finished plate, or promise what you cannot verify.

The nine major allergens

Milk, eggs, fish, crustacean shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, soybeans, sesame.

Examples worth checking: butter (milk), tahini (sesame), mayonnaise (egg). Brands and recipes vary. Other foods can cause allergies, too.

A useful handoff

"Table four has a milk allergy. Can we verify this dish and how we prepare it?"

Return the verified answer or limitation to the guest. This is a restaurant practice.

Shared fryer oil can transfer allergen protein. A separate basket does not separate the oil. Cooking is not a reliable allergen fix.

Clean, then sanitize

Scrape. Wash. Rinse. Sanitize. Air-dry.

Use the chemical label, correct test kit, required strength, and contact time. Do not mix chemicals or assume stronger is safer. Sanitizer alone does not remove food soil or allergen residue.

An emergency does not wait

Suspected severe allergic reaction, especially breathing trouble or throat swelling: call 911 immediately and alert the manager. Follow the emergency plan and dispatcher. Report vomit, sewage, unsafe water, pests, or unsafe equipment. Stop affected work; do not improvise a cleanup.

My person in charge: _____ Our emergency address: _____

Sources: [2026 FDA Food Code](#) (hands 2-301; dates 3-501.17-.18; temperatures 3-401.11, 3-501.14-.16; cleaning 4-6 and 4-7). [FDA allergy guidance](#). [USDA allergy emergency guidance](#).