PEAK SHIFT

Food Safety 101

The first-shift basics

A small class. Real restaurant moves.

BEGINNER CLASSROOM EDITION / 2026 MODEL FOOD CODE

Your first shift

Hands	A real handwashing run-through
Food	Storage, date dots, and temperatures
Guests	Allergy orders and clear communication
Cleanup	Clean tools and a safe next task

Ask early. You are not expected to guess.

Feeling sick? Tell the manager

Vomiting or diarrhea	Call before the shift. If it starts at work, stop food work and report it.
Yellow skin or eyes	This is called jaundice. Report it right away.
Sore throat with fever	Report the combination.
Infected wound	Report an open or draining infected cut or sore.

Also report a foodborne-illness diagnosis. Do not clear yourself to return.

A proper handwash

20

seconds
start to finish

1 Wet	Clean, running warm water
2 Soap	Use the hand soap
3 Scrub	Fingertips, between fingers, hands and exposed arms
4 Rinse	Clean, running warm water
5 Dry	Paper towel or approved hand dryer

At least 20 seconds for the whole wash. Scrub vigorously for 10-15 seconds.

When hands need a reset

Which moments call for a handwash?

A You used the restroom.

B You handled raw chicken and will make a salad.

C You touched your phone, then will handle food.

D You are about to put on gloves for a food task.

A new pair of gloves starts with clean hands.

Gloves: one task at a time

A glove change

A different food task

A tear or dirty glove

An interruption that contaminates gloves

A fresh start

Remove the old gloves

Wash when required before food work

Use a new pair for the next task

Single-use gloves are not washed or reused.

Ready-to-eat food

Salad greens

Sandwich bread

Cooked chicken

Ice and drink garnishes

Use tongs, deli tissue, a scoop, or single-use gloves. No bare hands.

How germs travel

Follow the hands and the handle. What happens to the salad?

Stop service. Discard the contaminated salad. Break the transfer route.

Where does this go?

TOP

Ready-to-eat food

BELOW

Raw food, separated and protected

LOWEST IN THIS EXAMPLE

Raw chicken in a leakproof container

Chicken juices must never drip onto food below.

A ready-to-use storage spot

Protected	Covered or otherwise protected, in a clean container
Identified	Common food name when the contents are not readily recognizable
Off the floor	Generally at least 6 inches above it
Away from chemicals	Separate storage that prevents contamination

Food storage is not the place for a mystery spray bottle.

Which foods need a date mark?

Ready-to-eat	No further safety cooking step before eating
Needs temperature control	For example, cooked chicken or cooked rice
Refrigerated more than 24 hours	The date-marking rule applies to these qualifying foods

At 41 F or below: up to 7 days. Preparation or opening day is Day 1.

A date dot, filled out

SAMPLE HOUSE LABEL

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

September 14 is Day 1. September 20 is Day 7.

TRY IT

Your turn: the rice label

Cooked rice, safely prepared and cooled September 16, 2026. Refrigerated at 41 F or below. Kept more than 24 hours. No shorter limit applies.

FOOD	_____
PREPARED	_____
DISCARD	_____
BY	_____

Count the preparation date as Day 1.

New pan, same clock

A clean replacement pan	Keep the original applicable date.
Old and new ingredients mixed	The earliest applicable date stays.
Required date mark missing	Discard the food. Do not guess a date.

First in, first out helps rotation. It never extends a safety limit.

Cold holding and hot holding

Normal cold holding

41 F

or below

Normal hot holding

135 F

or above

TCS food needs controlled time and temperature to limit germ growth.

A useful thermometer reading

1 Use the right probe	A thin tip works for thin foods.
2 Clean and sanitize it	Before use and between foods as required.
3 Check the food itself	Put the sensing area in the food; avoid the pan and bone.
4 Wait for a stable reading	Check more than one spot when needed.

A stable reading is different from a required cooking hold time.

Cooking and holding have different jobs

Raw chicken cooking

165 F

All parts reach this temperature; instantaneous under the model Code.

Cooked chicken hot holding

135 F or above

After safe cooking, maintain the holding temperature.

Other foods have different cooking requirements. Use the correct procedure.

Cooling leftovers takes a plan

135 F

Clock starts

70 F

Within 2 hours

41 F or below

Within 6 hours total

For the usual monitored cooling process: smaller portions, effective cooling, real checks.

Warm food and a missing history

Cooked rice is warm on the counter. Nobody knows when it left refrigeration.

Would reheating it settle the question?

No. Stop service and tell the manager. Do not taste, guess, or reset the clock.

The guest says, "I have an allergy"

"I have a milk allergy. Is this safe for me?"

"Let me check the ingredients and how we prepare it with our manager."

Use the guest's exact allergen. Do not guess or promise.

The Big 9

Milk

Butter, cheese, whey

Crustacean shellfish

Shrimp, crab, lobster

Wheat

Bread, flour, some sauces

Eggs

Mayonnaise, some dressings

Tree nuts

Almonds, walnuts, pecans

Soybeans

Tofu, many soy sauces

Fish

Anchovies in some sauces

Peanuts

Peanut butter, some sauces

Sesame

Tahini, some buns

These are the nine major allergens. Other foods can cause allergies, too.

The whole plate counts

A guest with a milk allergy orders a salad with this dressing.

RANCH DRESSING
Ingredient excerpt: buttermilk, mayonnaise (egg), herbs.
Contains: milk, egg.

FICTIONAL LABEL EXCERPT FOR PRACTICE

Would serving the same dressing on the side solve the allergy concern?

No. Check a suitable alternative and its preparation before confirming.

TRY IT

A clear allergy handoff

SERVER	"Table four reports a milk allergy. Can we verify this dish and the preparation?"
KITCHEN / MANAGER	"Milk allergy, table four. I will check the full ingredients and cross-contact risks before we confirm."
SERVER	"I will return to the guest with the verified answer."

Restaurant practice: name the allergen, get a response, carry the answer back.

Shared tools can share allergens

Shrimp and fries cook in the same fryer oil. A guest reports a shrimp allergy.

Does a separate fryer basket make those fries a safe promise?

No. Shared oil can carry allergen protein. Check a verified alternative.

The dishwashing sequence

1	2	3	4	5
Scrape	**Wash**	**Rinse**	**Sanitize**	**Air-dry**
Remove food debris	Detergent and proper water	Remove the detergent	Correct solution and contact time	No towel drying

Cleaning removes soil. Sanitizing reduces germs on the cleaned surface.

Sanitizer needs a check

The label	Which chemical, temperature, and contact time?
The test kit	Is this the right kit for this sanitizer?
The result	Does the concentration match the required range?

More chemical is not automatically safer.

When to stop and get help

Breathing trouble after eating	Call 911 immediately for a suspected severe allergic reaction. Alert the manager.
Vomiting, sewage, or unsafe water	Keep people and food away from the affected area. Notify the manager.
Pests, broken equipment, contamination	Stop the affected task or service. Report what you observed.

An emergency does not wait for permission to call for help.

Ready for the next shift

SHOW	The handwashing sequence
WRITE	A complete date label using Day 1 correctly
SAY	An allergy handoff with the exact allergen

You do not have to know everything. You do have to speak up and use the right process.