

Overcoming Challenges - Cooling

Food establishment management and staff often encounter many challenges with regards to rapidly cooling food through the temperature danger zone to a final temperature of 41°F or less.

3-501.14, 3-501.15 of the 2013 FDA Food Code states that time/temperature control for safety food shall be rapidly cooled to 41°F or less to prevent the growth of harmful bacteria

Common Challenges

There are many challenges associated with cooling food, but three main root causes can be directly correlated to controlling this hazard:

Staff Behavior

- Availability of properly calibrated thermometers
- Failure to monitor temperatures and report problems
- Relying on refrigerator air temperature rather than internal food temperatures
- Using large containers that do not promote quick cooling of food items

Refrigeration Equipment

- Trusting that the equipment will always work properly
- Lack of regular maintenance
- Placing recently prepared (warmer) product into smaller refrigeration equipment
- Lack of space or alternative cooling equipment (ice baths, chilling wands, etc.)

Management Behavior

- Staff not being informed of any pertinent information when shift changes occur
- Lack of accountability by staff to follow up on tasks
- Employees not trained to properly use thermometers
- Management does not make time to monitor employees in kitchen

Overcoming Challenges

There are effective options to consider when overcoming cooling challenges.

- Create Policies**
- Train Staff**
- Verify Policies are Working**