

CUYAHOGA COUNTY
BOARD OF HEALTH
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THE FLOW OF FOOD

Guidelines for Food Preparation

Thawing

- Move frozen food from your freezer to the refrigerator and within **24-48 hours** it should thaw, depending on the thickness of the food.
- **NEVER** thaw food at room temperature or leave it in a sink with standing water.
- Thaw food in your microwave **ONLY IF** you will be cooking the food right away.
- **NEVER** thaw food in the microwave and put it back in the refrigerator to be cooked at a later time.



Handling

- ~~**WASH YOUR HANDS**~~ before handling fruit or other food that does not require cooking.
- Use spatulas, tongs, wax paper or other kitchen tools to **limit hand contact with food**.
- **ALWAYS** wash your hands after touching raw food and before moving from one type of food to another.



Cooking

- Use a metal-stem thermometer that measures from **0-220°F** to test hot and cold food temperatures.
- Keep hot foods hot at **135°F** or higher and keep cold foods cold at **41°F** or less to prevent germs from growing on your food.



Cooling

- Use shallow pans, bowls or trays. Food will **cool faster** if it is in smaller portions and thin layers.
- Cut large pieces into smaller pieces.
- **Do not cover** your food with plastic wrap or foil until it is cooled to room temperature.



Storage

- Use a metal-stem thermometer to check the temperature of your refrigerator. Food keeps **best at 41°F** or lower.
- Throw away any perishables (food that can spoil) which are left at room temperature for **longer than 2 hours**.
- At 90°F or higher, throw away perishable food **after 1 hour**.

For more information

Cuyahoga County
Board of Health
ccbh.net

US Food & Drug Administration
fda.gov/food

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