



Food Safety Newsletter

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Different Types of Thermometers



- Metal stem with calibration nut
- Infrared
- Digital waterproof with max/min hold
- Digital metal stem
- Digital with thin tip probe

See the next page for examples of certification markings for commercial equipment.

Measuring Temperatures

The Ohio Uniform Food Safety Code states in chapter 3717-1-04.2 of the Ohio Administrative Code that “food temperature measuring devices shall be provided and readily accessible for use in ensuring attainment and maintenance of food temperatures as specified..” The second part of this section also states that “a temperature measuring device with a suitable small-diameter probe that is designed to measure the temperature of thin masses shall be provided and readily accessible to accurately measure the temperature in thin foods such as meat patties and fish fillets.”

So many times during an inspection I will ask the operator for their thermometer which leads to a 10-minute scavenger hunt. The entire time the operator is muttering “I know it’s around here somewhere, I just had it.” When the thermometer is finally produced, usually out of drawer that looks as though the items in it haven’t been used in about six months, it has a crust of dirt on it and reads some off the wall temperature.

Many different types of thermometers are available, and while many of you have the typical metal stem thermometer, a fairly new addition to the food code also requires a thin-tipped thermometer if you are cooking hamburgers and other thin foods. The

reasoning behind this change is that the regular metal stem thermometer takes an average temperature of an area of the stem. So, if only a small portion of the stem is in the food and the rest is measuring air temperature, then the temperature reading will not be accurate.

It is also a requirement that the thermometer maintains the proper temperature. Many thermometers are able to be calibrated.

Many of the meat thermometers are not able to be calibrated.

While many of you never use your thermometer, it can be a very useful tool. While it is useful for checking cooking

temperatures, it can also be used to ensure foods are cooling properly, and to check to make sure equipment is working properly. While you are not expected to use your thermometer to check everything you cook, hold, or cool, it should be used regularly to check your processes and equipment. Try it someday, you may be surprised.



A typical metal stem dial thermometer. Note the calibration nut on the bottom

Commercial Equipment

When purchasing new equipment for your food service operation or retail food establishment, it is important to determine whether this equipment is rated for commercial use. One specific company that regulates food equipment is NSF. Using voluntary standards which they have developed they

also test and certify equipment and audit production facilities for compliance. A lot of commercial equipment has been tested and certified by NSF. Commercial equipment is made to withstand the rigors of a commercial kitchen. They are also made to be easily cleanable and constructed of materials

which are safe for use with food. This marking, along with a few others from similar programs, are what we expect to see when new equipment is purchased. Call the Health Dept. before purchasing equipment to determine whether it is required to be commercial or if you are unsure of the rating.

Handwashing and Hand Sanitizers

Handwashing is one the most important steps in food safety and is the single most important means of preventing the spread of infection according to the Centers for Disease Control. Transmission of pathogenic bacteria, viruses, and parasites from raw food or ill workers to food by way of improperly washed hands continues to be one of the major factors in the spread of foodborne illnesses. The most common way that foodborne pathogens are transmitted in a food service operation or retail food establishment is through the fecal-oral route. This route refers to the transmission of pathogens from contaminated hands to food. To put it bluntly, not washing your hands after using the restroom. Common microbes transmitted this way include salmonellosis, shigellosis, hepatitis A, and giardiasis. This is why it is so important to stress handwashing to your employees. A handwashing sink is an important part of the operation, and when used properly may save the facility from a foodborne illness outbreak.

Many operators feel that the hand



A handwash sink may be any type of freestanding sink with soap and paper towels available. The Ohio Uniform Food Safety Code does not permit handwashing in the three-compartment sink.

sanitizer or alcohol-based sanitizing gel is a sufficient replacement for frequent handwashing. When working in the kitchen hands tend to become soiled with food debris, grease, etc. The FDA and CDC state that alcohol-based gels are less effective on hands soiled with fatty materials or on wet hands. So stress to your employees that proper handwashing is a necessary practice and using alcohol-based gel in place of handwashing does not adequately reduce important foodborne pathogens.

Handwashing posters as well as posters for many other aspects of food safety are available at the Health Department free of charge. Please call if you are interested.



Examples of certification marks rating food equipment for commercial use.

Education is a key step in food safety. If you wish to have your employees trained or are willing to host a food safety basics or person in charge class please contact me.

Cross Contamination

Opening a refrigerator tells a lot about a facility. The first thing is whether the facility is organized and whether they have enough refrigerator space. The second is whether they know or care about the possibility of cross contamination in the cooler. An adequate amount of refrigerator space can be an important step in preventing cross contamination. There are two ways for cross contamination to occur: while in storage or while preparing food. Cross contamination may occur when foods is being stored. A raw or improperly cooked food may contaminate other foods. The storage of eggs is a common example of how cross contamination occurs. Eggs are routinely stored on the top for easy access and to prevent breakage. Directly below the eggs may be lettuce for a salad or prepared cole slaw. What if one of those eggs happens to have a crack in it? Cross contamination then may occur. Even if a food is in a container there is a possibility for cross contamination. Store raw foods on the bottom to prevent cross contamination. An example of cross contamination during preparation: The employee is cutting raw chicken into pieces. When finished he rinses the juice off the cutting board and moves onto the lettuce for the salad. The cutting board was not properly washed, rinsed, and sanitized between using for a raw food and a ready-to-eat food.