Fact Sheet: Cooling

The purpose of this fact sheet is to provide information regarding best cooling practices. Please refer to the 2009 FDA Food Code Chapter 3-501.14 & 3-501.15 for complete Cooling Limits and Methods.

Rapid cooling is essential to the prevention of foodborne illness.

Two-Stage Cooling Method

The two stage cooling method reduces the cooked food's internal temperature in two steps:

- From 135°F to 70°F: within two hours of preparation, and
- From 70°F to 41°F: within four hours

Total cooling time should never exceed six hours.

Foods prepared from ambient temperature ingredients, such as tuna salad, must be cooled to 41°F or below within four hours of preparation.

APPROVED COOLING METHODS:

- Ice bath (stir frequently)
- Ice wands
- Smaller portions (cut or separate foods into small portions to cool faster)
- Shallow pans (2 or 4-inch pans are recommended)
- Metal pans rather than plastic
- Uncover or loosely cover to allow ventilation of warm/hot foods
- Use rapid cooling equipment (ex: blast chiller)

Bacteria grow rapidly in the DANGER ZONE between 41°F and 135°F. To facilitate a RAPID COOL through the DANGER ZONE, it is required that you use proper cooling methods.