

Key Updates to Tennessee's Food Service Establishment Law

The new Tennessee Food Service Establishment Rules became effective June 14, 2026. The most significant changes impacting food establishments are summarized below:

Chapter 1: Definitions

- **Sesame** added as a **major food allergen**.
- **"Ready-to-Eat" does not include:**
 - Commercially packaged food bearing a manufacturer's cooking instructions; and
 - Food for which the manufacturer has provided information that it has not been processed to control pathogens.

Chapter 2: Management and Personnel

- Food establishments must have **written procedures** for cleaning vomiting or diarrheal events.

Chapter 3: Food

- Internal cooking temperatures previously 155°F for 15 seconds are now **155°F for 17 seconds**.
- Internal cooking temperatures previously 165°F for 15 seconds are now **165°F instantaneously**.
- Ready-to-Eat foods **may not** be handled with bare hands unless cooked to heat all parts to at least **145°F**.
- Food establishments should **store, prepare, handle, and label food donations** according to TN Food Service Establishment Law and Rules.
- **Consumers must be notified in writing of major food allergens** as an ingredient in unpackaged food items that are served or sold to the consumer.

Chapter 3: Food (cont.)

- **Reduced Oxygen Packaged fish** labeled to be kept frozen until time of use **shall be removed from the reduced oxygen environment** prior to thawing under refrigeration, or prior to, or immediately upon completion of thawing under a process specified in 1200-23-01-.03(5)(a)(3)(ii).
- **4-Hour Time as a Public Health Control** may start at an **initial ambient temperature of 70°F or less**, provided the item does not exceed 70°F at any time and is held under a policy which meets 1200-23-01-.03(5)(a)(9).
- **Washing Fruits and Vegetables:** A test kit is required to test active ingredient(s) of wash solutions.

Chapter 4: Equipment, Utensils, and Linens

- If equipment is too large for the warewashing sink/machine, **alternative warewashing equipment** defined by 1200-23-01-.04(3)(a)(2)(iii) must be approved for use by the Department.

Chapter 5: Water, Plumbing, and Waste

- **Handwashing sinks** shall provide water through a mixing valve or combination faucet of **at least 85°F**.

Chapter 8: Compliance and Enforcement

- An establishment may submit an emergency operations plan in the event of **electrical/water supply interruption** and must **inform the department** if implemented.

