



# Temperature Control of Potentially Hazardous Foods

## Fines of up to \$2500 apply!

*Please ensure that all food handlers and business owners read this important information. Breaches relating to incorrect temperature control practices may result in fines of up to \$2500.*

**Potentially Hazardous Food (PHF) Definition:** Food that has to be kept at certain temperatures to minimise the growth of any pathogenic micro-organisms that may be present in the food or to prevent the formation of toxins in the food. Examples of potentially hazardous foods include, but are not limited to:

- Raw and cooked meat, poultry and fish
- Dairy products (e.g. milk, custard, cream etc.)
- Eggs
- Cooked rice, noodles and pasta
- Gravy and soup/stock
- Processed fruits and vegetables

The foods listed above contain all the necessary nutrients for bacteria/micro-organisms to grow if given the chance therefore, temperature control is essential to minimise this from occurring.

## Safety Measures

In accordance with the Food Safety Standard 3.2.2 Clauses 6 and 8, PHFs must be stored and displayed under temperature control. Foods that are intended to be stored or displayed frozen must remain frozen.

PHFs must be stored and displayed at a temperature that will minimise the growth of food poisoning bacteria in the food. This temperature must be **at or below 5°C**, or **at or above 60°C**. Should PHFs be stored or displayed between 5°C and 60°C (known as the temperature danger zone), the business must be able to demonstrate that storing or displaying food between these temperatures will not adversely affect the microbiological safety of the food.

PHFs stored or displayed at 5°C will still allow the growth of certain food poisoning bacteria such as *Listeria monocytogenes* and certain strains of *Bacillus cereus* and *Clostridium botulinum*. These bacteria, however, will grow slowly at 5°C and therefore, provided that the PHF is stored for a limited period and used within its nominated use-by date, the food will remain safe. It is therefore essential that regular stock rotation is maintained.

## '2 hour/4 Hour Rule'

The '2 hour/4 hour' rule below explains how long PHFs can be kept safely at temperatures within the 'Temperature Danger Zone'.

If a PHF has been held within the temperature danger zone:

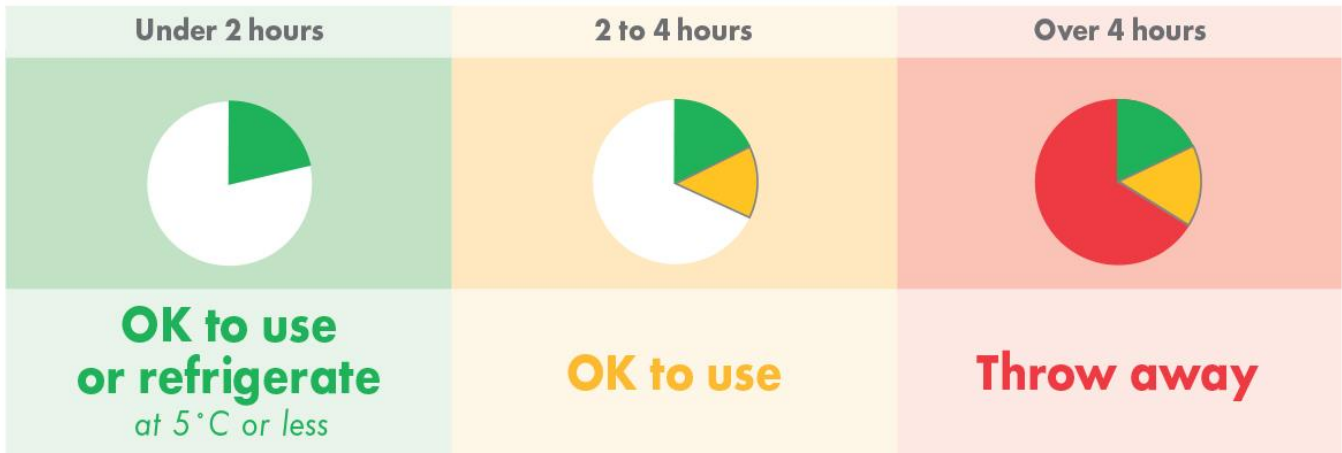
- For less than 2 hours – refrigerate or use immediately
- Between 2 hours and 4 hours – use immediately
- For more than 4 hours – throw out.

This rule may be used for displaying cold rolls, sandwiches, cream filled cakes etc. during a busy lunch period, but consideration must be made in regard to how long the food was out of temperature control during preparation and/or transport. **Records should be maintained** of what time the food was first out of temperature control and therefore, when the food can be re-refrigerated, used immediately or discarded. Keeping records is also

necessary to demonstrate to an Environmental Health Officer that the foods are being kept within the allowed time limits.

If for some reason you do not store, display or transport food at 5°C or below, or at 60°C or above and are not utilising the '2 hour/4 hour rule', you must be able to demonstrate that you have a safe alternative system in place, and that this system is supported by sound scientific evidence.

### Practical Example for the use of the '2 hour/4 Hour Rule':



Sandwiches are freshly prepared in a café between 10.30am and 11.30am (1 hour in the temperature danger zone!). They can now be displayed for 3 hours unrefrigerated, with any left-overs being discarded after this time.

However, it is quiet in the café that day, so at 12.30pm some of the sandwiches are placed into the fridge for sale later. The food handler marks the sandwiches to show they can only be held unrefrigerated for another 2 hours before being discarded.

Suggestions for monitoring the '2 hour/4 hour' rule.

- Develop a documented standard procedure
- Label individual foods with times/stickers
- Create a table to record times for individual food

### Celebrating Success

The City of Charles Sturt participates in both the Food Safety Rating Scheme and Deliciously Safe Program. The Food Safety Rating Scheme is a state wide program. Eligible businesses have an opportunity to achieve a star rating (3, 4 or 5) based on their compliance with the food laws during their routine inspection. Businesses are awarded a certificate identifying their achieved Star Rating.

The Deliciously Safe program is a City of Charles Sturt initiative and provides an opportunity for businesses outside the scope of the Food Safety Rating Scheme to be recognised for full compliance with the food laws at the time of their routine inspection. Achieving businesses are awarded a sticker and certificate identifying the business as Deliciously Safe.

Both programs afford an opportunity for further recognition on Council's website and potential for listing in Council's community publications.

### Need More Information?

If you require further information regarding food safety or to receive a Food Safety Kit, please contact Council's Environmental Health Team. Furthermore, don't forget...you must always notify Council whenever you start a new food business, transfer ownership or change the food business name. Notification forms are available from Council or on the Council's website.

Check out our free online Food Safety Training "I'm Alert" via Council's webpage under [Services > Food Hygiene > Food Safety Training](#).