

# Chill: Ready-to-go Article

## **COOL TIPS FOR KEEPING COLD FOOD COLD!**

Did you know that at room temperature, harmful bacteria in food can double every 20 minutes? And the more bacteria there are, the greater the chance you could become sick. So, it's important to refrigerate food quickly because cold temperatures keep most harmful bacteria from multiplying.

Refrigerate food quickly because cold temperatures keep most harmful bacteria from multiplying.

## **Here are some helpful tips for keeping cold food cold:**

Make sure the temperature in the refrigerator is 40 °F or below and 0 °F or below in the freezer. Use a refrigerator/freezer thermometer to check the temperature.

### **Tips**

Don't overfill the refrigerator. Cool air must circulate to help keep food safe. Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared food, and leftovers within 2 hours of purchase or preparation, or within 1 hour if the temperature is above 90 °F.

Thaw food in the refrigerator. For quick thawing, submerge in cold water in airtight packaging or thaw in the microwave, and cook the food immediately.

Divide large quantities of leftovers into shallow containers for quicker cooling in the refrigerator.

Marinate food in the refrigerator.

When transporting food, place cold food in a cooler with a cold source such as ice or commercial freezing gels. Keep the cooler in the coolest part of your car, rather than in a hot trunk.

## **Just the Facts, Ma'am**

Here are some common myths about refrigeration and defrosting, along with just the facts!

Myth: Refrigeration stops bacterial growth.

Fact: Not so. Refrigeration slows, but does not prevent the growth of harmful bacteria. So always remember to refrigerate food quickly!

Myth: I can safely thaw food on my kitchen counter at room temperature.

Fact: Remember, bacteria grow rapidly at room temperature. You should avoid keeping food in the Danger Zone—the unsafe temperatures between 40 and 140 °F. To keep your food safe, always follow the Thaw Law: Never defrost food at room temperature. Thaw food in the refrigerator. For quick defrosting, thaw food in airtight packaging submerged in cold water or thaw in the microwave, and cook the food immediately.

## CHILL FACTS

Bacteria grow most rapidly in the Danger Zone—the unsafe temperatures between 40 °F and 140 °F—so it's key to keep foods out of this temperature range. And since cold temperatures keep most harmful bacteria from growing and multiplying be sure to refrigerate foods quickly!

### The Top 4 Cool Rules

**The Chill Factor**—Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared foods, and leftovers within 2 hours of purchase or preparation, or within 1 hour if the temperature is above 90 °F. Marinate foods in the refrigerator.

**The Thaw Law**—Never defrost food at room temperature. Thaw food in the refrigerator. For quick thawing, submerge food in cold water in airtight packaging, or thaw food in the microwave if you'll be cooking it immediately.

**Divide and Conquer**—Separate large amounts of leftovers into small, shallow containers for quicker cooling in the refrigerator.

**Avoid the Pack Attack**—Don't over-stuff the refrigerator. Cold air must circulate to keep food safe.

### Serve & Preserve

When serving cold food at a buffet, picnic, or barbecue, keep these "chilling" tips in mind.

Cold foods should be kept at 40 °F or colder.

Keep all perishable foods chilled right up until serving time.

Place containers of cold food on ice for serving to make sure they stay cold.

It's particularly important to keep custards, cream pies, and cakes with whipped-cream or cream-cheese frostings refrigerated. Don't serve them if refrigeration is not possible.

### The Big Thaw

Foods must remain at a safe temperature while thawing. Now is the perfect time to learn about the DOs and DON'Ts of defrosting.

#### Defrosting DOs

Defrost food in the refrigerator. This is the safest method for all foods.

Short on time? Thaw meat and poultry in airtight packaging submerged in cold water. Change the water every 30 minutes, so the food continues to thaw.

Defrost food in the microwave only if it will be cooked immediately.

Food can be cooked without defrosting it first. Make sure food reaches its safe internal temperature.

#### Defrosting DON'Ts

Avoid keeping foods in the Danger Zone—the unsafe temperatures between 40 °F and 140 °F.

Don't defrost food in hot water.

Don't thaw food on the counter. Food that's left out at room temperature longer than 2 hours or 1 hour if the temperature is above 90 °F, is not within a safe temperature range and may not be safe to eat.

## **Hit the Road!**

When traveling with food, be aware that time, temperature, and a cold source are key. Here are some tips to help keep your travels cool!

Keep frozen foods in the refrigerator or freezer until you're ready to go.

Always use ice or cold packs and fill your cooler with food. A full cooler will maintain its cold temperatures longer than one that is partially filled.

When traveling, keep the cooler in the air-conditioned passenger compartment of your car, rather than in a hot trunk.

If you've asked for a doggie bag to take home from a restaurant, it should be refrigerated within 2 hours of serving.