

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
HEALTH REGULATION AND LICENSING ADMINISTRATION

Fact Sheet: Hot and Cold Holding

Did You Know? Foodborne illnesses cause nearly 128,000 hospitalizations per year. And those are only the cases that get reported. Have you ever wondered about the food being held on a hot or cold self-service bar? Foods like mayonnaise, eggs, salad dressings, chicken, beef, and pork are highly susceptible to growth of bacteria when the food held out of temperature for an extended amount of time. Remember these simple facts when holding hot or cold foods for service.



FACT: All hot foods must be maintained at 135°F or above while being held for service.

FACT: All cold foods must be maintained at 41°F or below while being held for service.

FACT: Food can also be subject to temperature abuse inside of improperly functioning heating and cold holding units. Check the temperature of these devices by keeping a thermometer inside of the unit. For cold reading, check the warmest section of the unit; for hot reading, check the coolest section of the unit. Don't always trust outside display units which can commonly give misleading temperature readings. Check the temperatures of food stored in these units to obtain true holding temperatures.

Recommendations

- Avoid storing foods in the range of temperatures between 41°F – 135°F, the “Danger Zone.”
- Use a food thermometer frequently to check the temperatures of your food.
- Discard food that has been held out of temperature for longer than 2 hours.
- Pre-chill foods prepared for cold storage. Use ice underneath while storing on a food bar.