

# Food thermometers

Everyone needs one in the kitchen

## Why use a food thermometer?

- A food thermometer helps hold food at a safe temperature, prevents overcooking and food-borne illness.
- A food thermometer is the only way to make sure cooked food is safe.

## When do I use a food thermometer?

- A food thermometer should be used when cooking meat, poultry, fish, casseroles, stuffing, eggs and egg dishes.

## Where do I put a food thermometer in food?

- Insert the food thermometer in the thickest part of the food, away from pan edges and away from bone, fat or gristle.
  - Poultry: Insert into the inner thigh area near the breast of the chicken or turkey, but not touching the bone.
  - Ground meat or poultry: Insert into the thickest area and insert sideways in thin items like patties. A ½-inch patty cooks evenly. Brown meat does not mean it is safe to eat.
  - Beef, pork, lamb, veal, ham, roasts, steaks or chops: If irregularly shaped, check temperature in several places.
  - Stuffing, egg dishes: Insert into the thickest part.

## Safety tips

- When reheating food, the temperature needs to be at 165 F or hot and steaming. Bring soups and gravies to a rolling boil.
- After each use, wash the stem section of the food thermometer in hot, soapy water.

## How do I use a food thermometer?

- An oven-proof thermometer: Insert food thermometer 2- to 2½- inches in the thickest part of the food. Put the food in the oven. Keep the thermometer in the food throughout cooking.



oven-proof thermometer

- An instant-read thermometer: Take food out of the oven. Insert food thermometer 2- to 2½- inches in the thickest part of the food. Remove thermometer after reading. Return food to oven if more cooking is needed.



instant-read thermometer

## What temperatures do I use to tell me the food is safe to eat?

Ground beef, veal lamb, pork	160 F
Poultry	
Ground chicken, turkey	165 F
Whole chicken, turkey	165 F
Poultry parts	165 F
Beef, veal, lamb (roasts, steaks, chops)	145 F
Ham	
Fresh (raw)	145 F
Pre-cooked, to reheat	140 F
Reheated	165 F
Pork (roasts, steaks, chops)	145 F
Stuffing (cooked alone or in turkey)	165 F
Egg dishes like custards	160 F
Eggs	Cook until yolk and white are firm
Fish	
Thick steak	145 F
Thin filet	Flakes with a fork
Leftovers, casseroles	165 F
Hot dogs, luncheon meats, cold cuts and other deli-style foods	Heat until steaming hot*

\*Although fully cooked, they can become contaminated with a bacteria (*Listeria monocytogenes*). People who are most vulnerable to this bacteria are pregnant women, babies, older adults and those with weak immune systems.

### Calibrating a food thermometer

- Calibrating a thermometer is how you check to see if it is measuring the temperature correctly.
- How often do you calibrate a thermometer? Whenever you drop it and when you first get it. If you use it often, check it once a month. If you haven't used it in awhile, check it again.

#### *Ice water method*

- Fill a large glass with crushed ice.
- Add clean tap water to the top of the ice and stir well.
- Put the food thermometer stem a minimum of 2 inches into the ice/water mixture. Do not let the thermometer touch the sides or bottom of the glass. Wait 30 seconds before adjusting. (Some thermometers can be adjusted by turning a nut under the head of the thermometer).
- Without removing the stem from the ice, hold the adjusting nut under the head of the thermometer and turn the head so the pointer reads 32 F.

Looking for information about food, nutrition and health? Go online to [missourifamilies.org/](http://missourifamilies.org/).  
Adapted from: Pass the Taste Test...Use a Thermometer!, University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension  
and on latest information from FightBAC online at [fightbac.org/content/view/93/2/](http://fightbac.org/content/view/93/2/) accessed 6/09