Fact Sheet: Hot and Cold Holding

Did You Know? ***Foodborne Illness causes nearly 750,000 hospitalizations in the United States per year. And those are only the cases that get reported to local health departments. 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 is held out of temperature for an extended amount of time. Follow these simple facts when holding hot or cold foods for service.***

Fact: All hot foods must be maintained at 140˚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.

Recommendations:

- **Avoid storing foods in the range of temperatures of 41˚F - 140˚F, the "Danger Zone"**
- **Use a food thermometer frequently to check the temperatures of your foods.**
- **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.**

Fact: Food can also be subject to temperature abuses inside of improperly functioning heated 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 temperatures. Check the temperatures of foods stored in these units to obtain true holding temperatures.

For more information please contact the Food Safety and Hygiene Inspection Services Division (202) 535-2180

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