

Food Facts

NEWSLETTER

April 2018

Environmental Health Division

Volume 28 No. 1

Foodfacts is designed to keep food employees, chefs, managers, and owners informed, connected, and engaged about current food safety news.



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Local Outbreak Linked to Improper Cooling

Recently, several people became ill after eating food catered by a local restaurant. Collaborative efforts by the restaurant and PHMDC staff helped to quickly confirm the pathogen responsible for the illness, *Clostridium perfringens*. The pathogen was a big clue to the reason of this outbreak, as *C. perfringens* is usually associated with improper cooling methods.

Cooling is a risky process and **must be done quickly** to be safe. If cooling food temperatures stay in the danger zone too long, pathogens may grow to a dangerous level. Often inspectors observe foods cooling in tightly covered containers or dense foods stored in large containers; both of these practices trap heat in, thereby slowing the cooling process. By simply using **shallow, metal pans** and **uncovering** the food during active cooling, the cooling process happens more quickly. (And, yes, the Wisconsin Food Code does allow food to be uncovered when actively cooling.)



For more tips on improving your cooling, see the **Operator Toolbox** below.

[Cooling Pop Quiz](#)

1. Which factor(s) can affect cooling time?

- A. Portion size of food
- B. Density of food
- C. Container material
- D. All of the above

2. When should foods be cooled in the refrigerator?

- A. After the steam subsides
- B. Once the hot food has cooled to 70 °F
- C. After leaving out at room temperature for one hour
- D. Once the hot food has cooled to 135 °F

3. Which pathogen is associated with improper cooling?

- A. E. Coli
- B. Norovirus
- C. Clostridium perfringens
- D. Vibrio

4. What method(s) are best to cool food rapidly?

- A. Ice bath
- B. Covered in walk-in cooler
- C. Shallow metal pans
- D. A and C

*Scroll to bottom to check your answers

Proper Cooling Prevents Illness

It is important to follow the proper process for cooling hot foods. If cooled improperly, **dangerous bacteria** can grow and make people sick. These bacteria produce toxins that may not be destroyed by reheating.

Local Restaurant Finds that Proper Cooling Methods Save Time and Space

Cooling quickly is necessary for food safety, but did you know that it can also **save time and storage space**? Stephan May, Chef for Banzo Mediterranean Restaurant, reports that using proper cooling methods increases his kitchen's efficiency. Stephan is cooling quickly by using uncovered, metal sheet pans on a speed rack in a walk-in cooler. Once cooled, the food is transferred into covered containers and dated, freeing up storage space and improving organization.



"Cooling fast saves time, and, because you know your food is being cooled properly, you can move onto other tasks. This is beneficial to the entire process." - Stephan May, Chef, Banzo Mediterranean Restaurant

Operator Toolbox

Don't assume that your current cooling methods are sufficient. Cooling within the required time frame is not always easy. Check your cooling methods with our new cooling fact sheets. Performing a **cooling study** in your restaurant today may prevent an outbreak from occurring tomorrow. Your health inspector can help you do that too. Please give us a call or email.

[Cooling Methods](#)
[Cooling Log](#)

We Want to Hear From You

Do you have questions, suggestions or tips to share?

Email us at foodfacts@publichealthmdc.com

Pop Quiz Answers

1. (D) All of the above
2. (D) Once the hot food has cooled to 135 degrees F
3. (C) Clostridium Perfringens
4. (D) A and C

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