



Safe Food Handling Practices and Procedures

Standards, site decisions, and record forms

A working document for restaurant and hospitality kitchens. Part one sets the standard at each of the eight stages food moves through, with US and UK figures side by side. Part two gives you the blank record forms to print and use.

Part one sets the standard at each stage and names the form to record it on. **Your site setup** is a single page of decisions only you can make. **Part two** is eight blank record forms. Print as many as you need.

Not an SOP template. This document gives you the standards and the records. If you need the SOP document structure itself, use the free GoAudits Food SOP Template.

Figures follow the FDA Food Code (2022) and UK Food Standards Agency guidance. US states adopt different editions and may amend specifics. UK figures apply to England, Wales and Northern Ireland unless Scotland is named. Verify against the code in force for your sites.

The figures everything else depends on

Control	United States (FDA Food Code)	United Kingdom (FSA)
Danger zone	41°F to 135°F (5°C to 57°C)	8°C to 63°C
Cold holding	41°F (5°C) or below	8°C or below is the legal maximum. FSA recommends setting fridges to 5°C
Hot holding	135°F (57°C) or above	63°C or above
Frozen storage	0°F (-18°C) or below	-18°C or below
Cooling	135°F to 70°F within 2 hours, then to 41°F within 4 more. 6 hours total	To 8°C or below, ideally within 90 minutes
Reheating	165°F (74°C) within 2 hours	Steaming hot throughout, equivalent to 70°C for 2 minutes. Scotland: 82°C by law. Once only
Cooking	165°F poultry and stuffed items; 155°F for 17 sec ground and injected meats; 145°F for 15 sec whole cuts, fish, eggs to order; 145°F for 4 min whole roasts; 135°F produce for hot holding	Core 70°C for 2 minutes, or an equivalent: 75°C for 30 sec, 80°C for 6 sec, 65°C for 10 min, 60°C for 45 min

Two figures people get wrong. USDA's 40°F to 140°F danger zone is consumer guidance for home kitchens, not the foodservice standard. And the UK sets no single legal cooking temperature: 70°C for 2 minutes is the FSA standard control, with the equivalents above.

Part one: the standard at each stage

Eight stages in the order food moves through a kitchen. Figures are fixed. Every stage names the form you record it on.

Stage	Standard	Limits	Record on
1 Receiving	Probe and inspect before signing. Reject on damaged packaging, out-of-date codes, or any sign of thaw and refreeze. Once accepted, the temperature history is yours.	Chilled 41°F / 8°C Hot 135°F / 63°C Frozen: solid US milk, shell eggs: 45°F	Form 1
2 Storage	Raw below ready-to-eat, poultry lowest. Every opened or decanted item dated. Ready-to-eat under refrigeration carries a discard date. Dry goods sealed, off the floor, first in first out. Chemicals stored separately.	Chilled 41°F / 8°C Frozen 0°F / -18°C FSA advises 5°C	Form 2
3 Thawing	Four approved methods only: under refrigeration (allow 24 hours per 5 lb / 2.3 kg), under cold running water, microwave with cooking to follow immediately, or during cooking. Never at ambient. Thaw below ready-to-eat with drip containment. Never refreeze.	Never on the bench	Label the container
4 Preparation	Separate boards, knives and surfaces for raw and ready-to-eat, hands washed between. No bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food. Separate by time or area where layout allows. Surfaces cleaned and sanitised between tasks.	No bare hands on ready-to-eat	Form 7 if a check fails
5 Cooking	Probe the thickest part, avoiding bone, fat and pan. Check more than one item per batch. Calibrate probes on schedule and after any drop or extreme exposure.	US 165°F poultry 155°F/17s ground 145°F/15s whole cuts UK core 70°C / 2 min	Forms 3 and 6
6 Cooling and reheating	Containers no more than 2–4 in / 5–10 cm deep, uncovered or loosely covered while cooling. Miss the US 2-hour gate and you reheat and restart, or discard. Food cannot enter hot holding without being reheated first: holding equipment reheats nothing.	US 70°F in 2h, 41°F in 6h total UK 8°C in 90 min Reheat US 165°F, UK 70°C/2min, Scotland 82°C	Form 4
7 Holding	Bring units up to temperature before food goes in. Do not fill cold wells above the chill line. Probe the food, not the air or water bath. Time instead of temperature: US, start in range, mark a 4-hour discard time, serve or discard within it (6 hours for cold starting at 41°F and never exceeding 70°F). UK, hot below 63°C for one period up to 2 hours, chilled above 8°C for one period up to 4 hours, once.	Hot 135°F / 63°C Cold 41°F / 8°C	Form 5
8 Service and waste	Clean utensil per dish, handle above the rim, swapped at least every 4 hours in continuous use. Display covered. Replace trays rather than topping up: fresh product on a depleted tray buries the oldest food. Waste segregated, containers closable, bins away from prep.	Utensils every 4 hours	Form 7

Controls that apply at every stage

Handwashing

Standard. After raw food, after waste, after breaks, after touching face, hair or phone, after the toilet, and before any ready-to-eat task. Twenty seconds with soap and warm water, backs of hands, between fingers, under nails, dried properly.

Gloves do not replace handwashing. A CDC observation study of 321 restaurant workers found those wearing gloves attempted handwashing less often than those without, 18% against 37%. If you introduce a glove policy without a handwashing policy, compliance can fall.

Staff illness and fitness to work

US Five reportable symptoms to the person in charge: vomiting, diarrhoea, jaundice, sore throat with fever, and an infected wound or lesion with pus on hands, wrists or exposed arms. **Six pathogens** trigger exclusion or restriction: Norovirus, Hepatitis A, *Salmonella* Typhi, *Shigella* species, Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli*, nontyphoidal *Salmonella*. A written employee health policy is required, and rules tighten where a highly susceptible population is served.

UK Staff report illness immediately. Anyone with diarrhoea or vomiting is excluded from food handling for **48 hours from when symptoms stop naturally**, without medication.

Check your sick pay policy against your reporting policy. The FSA warns that penalising staff for sickness absence, including not paying them while excluded, can push them to work while ill. Incentives rewarding fewer sick days do the same. A policy that punishes reporting produces under-reporting, and the procedure will look fine on paper the whole time.

Your site: Who receives an illness report? _____

Is exclusion paid? Yes / No If no, what stops staff working while ill? _____

Form to use: Form 8, Fitness to work declaration.

Allergen control

Standard. Allergen cross-contact is a different hazard from microbiological cross-contamination: cooking destroys pathogens but not allergens, so a microbiologically clean surface can still carry enough protein to cause a reaction. Separate storage, separate equipment or dedicated prep time, and ingredient information that stays accurate when a supplier substitutes or a recipe changes. UK operations must give information on 14 named allergens.

Your site: Who owns the allergen matrix? _____

When was it last reviewed? _____ Next review: _____

What triggers an out-of-cycle review? (Supplier change, recipe change, new dish) _____

Your site setup

The standards above are fixed. These decisions are yours. Fill them in once, then print part two.

Site		Document owner	
Review date		Local authority	
Who receives deliveries			
Fridge and freezer units to log			
How often temperatures are recorded, and by whom			
Shelf life for opened ready-to-eat items			
Colour coding scheme			
Number of probes, and calibration frequency			
Holding check interval through service			
Do you use time instead of temperature? If yes, where			
Who receives an illness report			
Is exclusion paid? If not, what stops staff working while ill			
Who owns the allergen matrix, and when is it reviewed			

Part two: record forms

Print as many copies as you need. Each form maps to a stage in part one. Keep completed forms for the period your local authority requires.

Form 1 • Goods-in record

Date	Time	Supplier	Product	Temp reading	Accept / Reject	Initials

Reject if: chilled above 41°F / 8°C • frozen showing ice crystals or fluid stains • hot below 135°F / 63°C • packaging damaged • out of date. Record the rejection, do not leave the line blank.

Form 2 • Fridge and freezer log

Date	Time	Unit	Reading	In range?	Action if not	Initials

Target: chilled 41°F / 8°C or below (FSA recommends setting fridges to 5°C) • frozen 0°F / -18°C or below.

Form 3 • Cooking temperature log

Date	Time	Dish / batch	Target	Reading	Pass / Fail	Initials

US: 165°F poultry and stuffed items • 155°F / 17 sec ground and injected • 145°F / 15 sec whole cuts, fish, eggs to order • 145°F / 4 min whole roasts.
UK: core 70°C for 2 min, or 75°C / 30 sec.

Form 4 • Cooling log

Record a reading at **each** stage. A single entry at the end shows the food got cold but not how long it took, which is the part being measured.

Date	Food	Start time	Stage 1 70°F by (time)	Stage 2 41°F by (time)	Pass / Action taken	Initials

If 70°F is not reached within 2 hours: reheat to 165°F and restart cooling, or discard. UK: to 8°C or below, ideally within 90 minutes.

Form 5 • Hot and cold holding check sheet

Date	Unit / dish	Hot or cold	Check 1 time / temp	Check 2 time / temp	Check 3 time / temp	Action if out	Initials

Hot 135°F / 63°C or above · cold 41°F / 8°C or below. Probe the food, not the air or the water bath. If using time instead of temperature, record the discard time on the food and note it here.

Form 6 • Probe calibration record

Date	Probe ID	Ice point reading (32°F / 0°C)	Boiling reading (212°F / 100°C)	Pass / Fail	Action	Initials

Calibrate on your set schedule and after any drop or exposure to extreme temperature. A probe that fails is taken out of service, not used carefully.

Form 7 • Corrective action log

A finding with no owner and no closure date is a record of a problem, not a control.

Date	What was found	Immediate action	Root cause	Owner	Due	Closed

Root cause matters: a gap in the procedure needs the procedure rewritten. A trained person not following a clear procedure is a supervision problem, and retraining will not fix it.

Form 8 • Fitness to work declaration

Name		Date	
Role / area		Shift	

In the last 48 hours have you had any of the following?	Yes	No
Vomiting		
Diarrhoea		
Jaundice (yellowing of skin or eyes)		
Sore throat with fever		
Infected wound, boil or lesion with pus on hands, wrists or exposed arms		
Contact with anyone who has had vomiting or diarrhoea		

Signed (employee)		Date	
Decision	Fit to work / Restricted (no open food) / Excluded		
Return-to-work date		Signed (manager)	

UK: exclusion is 48 hours from when symptoms stop naturally, without medication. **US:** exclusion or restriction depends on the symptom, the pathogen, and whether you serve a highly susceptible population. Check the Food Code before returning anyone to open food.

Turn these forms into checks that close themselves

Paper forms record what happened. They do not tell you whether a check was missed, flag a failure to anyone, or prove who did it. GoAudits turns each form in part two into a mobile checklist your team completes on shift.

- **Photo and timestamp evidence** on every check, so a completed item shows what was actually seen
- **Corrective actions with owners and due dates**, assigned in app and tracked to closure
- **Multi-site dashboards** comparing sites, teams and periods, so drift shows before an inspector finds it
- **Offline capture** for cold rooms, basements, central kitchens and mobile units

[Start a free trial](#)
[Book a demo](#)

Sources

FDA Food Code (2022): 3-401.11 cooking, 3-501.14 cooling, 3-501.16 hot and cold holding, 3-501.19 time as a public health control, 2-201.11 and 2-201.12 employee health.

UK Food Standards Agency: Chilling food correctly; Cooking safely in your business; Fitness to work. Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013, Schedule 4. Food Hygiene (Scotland) Regulations 2006. Regulation (EC) No 852/2004, Annex II, Chapter VIII.

Green L, et al. Food worker hand washing practices: an observation study. *Journal of Food Protection* 2006;69(10):2417–23.

This document is a reference and does not replace your HACCP plan or food safety management system. Regulations change and local authorities may enforce stricter requirements.