

Though in-person Extension meetings, events and classes are canceled until June 30, we are still working in your communities and bringing online education and resources to all Minnesotans.

Food thermometers: how to use them and check their accuracy



Food thermometers help you:

- Cook food to a safe temperature
- Prevent overcooking and get the best flavor
- Hold and store foods safely

Use a food thermometer **every** time you prepare hamburgers, poultry, roasts, pork chops, egg casseroles, meat loaves, and other combination dishes.

How to use a food thermometer

Large oven-proof dial thermometer

- Insert into whole poultry and roasts at the beginning of the cooking time and leave there while cooking.
- Insert the thermometer in the center of the thickest portion without touching fat or bone.
- Check readings as the food cooks.

Dial thermometers

- Insert stem at least 2 inches into the thickest part of the food without touching fat or bone.
- The temperature should register in about 15 to 20 seconds.
- Insert sideways into thin foods like hamburgers and chicken breasts.

Digital thermometers

- Insert stem at least 1/2 inch into the center of the thickest part of the food without touching fat or bone.
- The temperature will register in 5 seconds.
- Ideal for thin hamburgers, chicken breasts, pork chops, etc.

How to check the accuracy of a food thermometer

Dial thermometers should be checked periodically. Follow manufacturer's recommendations.

Ice water method

1. Fill a large glass with ice.
2. Add water to the top of the ice and stir well. Let stand for 3 minutes.
3. Place the thermometer stem at least 2 inches into the mixture.
4. The thermometer should read 32 degrees after 30 seconds.

Boiling water method

1. Bring water in a deep pan to a full rolling boil.
2. Immerse the stem of thermometer 2 inches into the boiling water.
3. The thermometer should read 212 degrees after 30 seconds.

To calibrate

Follow manufacturer instructions to make adjustments until the correct temperature registers and re-test.

Suzanne Driessen, Extension educator

Reviewed in 2018

© 2020 Regents of the University of Minnesota. All rights reserved. The University of Minnesota is an equal opportunity educator and employer.