

2026

Kitchen Safety Champions:

Precision • Passion • Protection

The Labeling Legend



Any working container holding food removed from its original package should be clearly labeled with the common name of the food.

Date-Marking

TCS foods prepared or opened and held more than 24 hours be clearly date-marked, allowing a maximum of 7 days at 41°F or below.



Calibration Champ



The Hygiene Hero



The Audit Master

Accuracy Matters:

- Your thermometer must hit temps within $\pm 2^\circ\text{F}$ in an ice bath.

Calibrate like a Pro:

- Dropped it? Bumped it? Use it daily? Time for a quick calibration.

Hand Sanitizer is not a substitute for soap and water.

- Scrub for 20 seconds, especially after touching your face, hair or phone.
- Use a barrier to turn off the faucet.

Inspection Readiness

Health inspectors love looking at the "invisible" spots.

- Check the gaskets on the reach ins and the undersides of the prep tables. If it's sticky, scrub it.

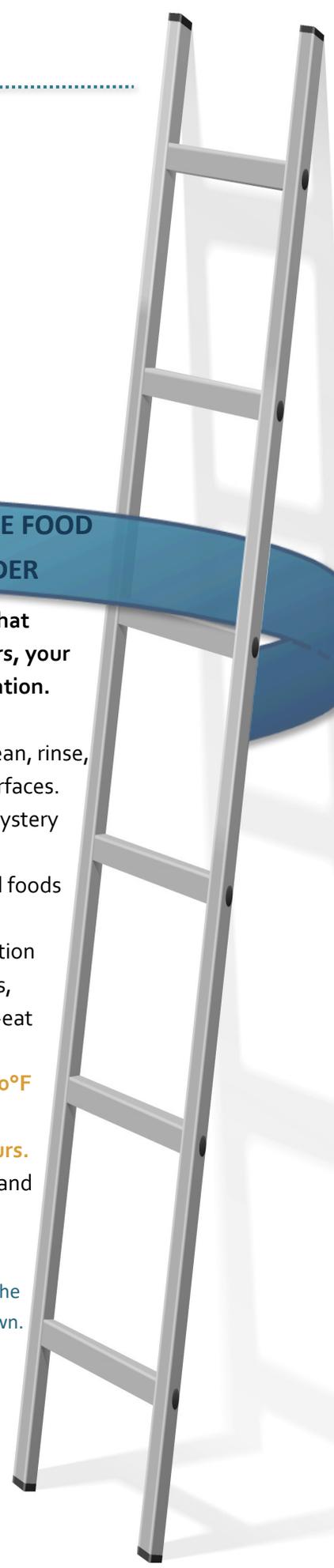
2026 CLIMB THE FOOD SAFETY LADDER

A half-year of habits that protect your customers, your team, and your reputation.

- Reset your station: Clean, rinse, sanitize and air-dry surfaces.
- Use clear labels— no mystery sauces.
- Hot foods $135^\circ\text{F}+$, cold foods 41°F or below.
- Stop cross-contamination chaos: keep raw meats, produce and ready-to-eat food separate.
- Cool from $135^\circ\text{F} \rightarrow 70^\circ\text{F}$ in 2 hours, then $70^\circ\text{F} \rightarrow 41^\circ\text{F}$ in 4 hours.
- Keep sanitizers fresh, and test strips ready.

Sick? Report it. Don't be the reason the team goes down.

Doubt? Toss it. When in doubt, toss it out.



The Food Safety Survival Guide: Pop Quiz

1

You are calibrating your thermometer in an ice-water slush. What temperature should it read to be considered accurate?

- A) 0°F
- B) 32°F
- C) 41°F

2

It's June and you've just made a 5-gallon pot of chili. To safely cool it, you must get it from 135°F to 70°F within how many hours?

- A) 1 hour
- B) 2 hours
- C) 4 hours

3

You've been wearing gloves to prep onions for 3 hours. The tickets start rolling in for steaks. What is the correct procedure?

- A) Keep the gloves on; onion are low-risk.
- B) Spray the gloves with sanitizer and keep working.
- C) Remove gloves, wash hands for 20 seconds, and put on new gloves.

4

You find a container of house-made dressing in the walk-in. It has a "Prepped On" date of Jan 1st, but no "Discard" date. Today is Jan 5th. What is the rule?

- A) Keep it; it's only been 4 days.
- B) Smell test it; if it's fine, use it.
- C) Toss it. If it doesn't have a discard date, it's a violation.

The "Fix It" Flip-Chart

See a Problem? Use these suggested Corrective Actions to solve it.

Temperature Failures

- The Problem: Hot food on the line drops below 135°F.
- The Fix: **Under 2 hours:** Reheat food to 165°F for 15 seconds and return to service.
 - **Over 2 hours (or unknown):** TOSS IT.
- Prevent: Stir frequently and check steam table water levels.



Cooling Failures

- The Problem: Large batch of soup is still at 90°F after 2 hours.
- The Fix: Since it failed to reach 70°F in the first 2 hours, it must be **reheated** to 165°F and restarted or discarded.
- Prevent: Use ice wands and shallow metal pans (plastic holds heat too long).



Cross-Contamination

- The Problem: A server used the same tongs for raw beef and cooked beef.
- The Fix: Stop preparation immediately. Discard the contaminated portion.
 - Wash, rinse and sanitize the tongs and any other contaminated surfaces.
- Prevent: Keep raw utensils in a separate container or area.



Sanitizer Strength

- The Problem: The sani-bucket test strip shows 0 ppm.
- The Fix: Dump the bucket. Refill with the correct ratio of chemical to water.
 - Retest with a new strip.
- Prevent: Change buckets every 2-4 hours or sooner if the water looks cloudy.

2026 Seasonal Deep Clean List



Jan-Feb: The Storage & Precision Check

[] **The Walk-In: Floor to Ceiling Wipe:** Remove all bins. Wipe down wire racking and sweep/mop corners where old labels or product scraps hide.

[] **Thermometer Calibration Log:** Ensure every employee's thermometer is calibrated and results are logged.

[] **Dry Storage "FIFO" Check:** Rotate older flour, spices, and canned goods to the front. Wipe down dusty lids.

Mar-Apr: The Inspection Readiness Check

[] **Gasket Hygiene:** Use a warm soapy cloth to clean the folds of every refrigerator and freezer gasket. A clean seal prevents the "Danger Zone" (40°F - 140°F).

[] **Drain Sanitation:** Pour an approved enzyme cleaner or sanitizer down all floor drains to prevent fruit fly breeding before spring hits.

[] **The Ice Machine Audit:** Empty the bin completely. Sanitize the interior and the scoop holder. Check the water filter date.

May-June: The High-Volume Cross-Contamination Check

[] **Allergen Station Reset:** Inspect designated allergen boards and knives for deep grooves. If they are heavily scarred, they can harbor protein - replace them.

[] **Line Cooler Drop Ins:** Remove the metal inserts from the prep line. Clean the well underneath where food drippings collect and freeze.

[] **Fan Guard Cleaning:** Wipe the dust off the cooling fans in the Walk-In. Dust prevents proper airflow and stresses the compressor.

July: The Heat & Pest Lockdown

[] **Dumpster Pad Scrub:** Power wash or scrub the area around the outdoor trash. High July heat **makes this a magnet for flies and rodents.**

[] **Air Curtain/ Door Seal Check:** Ensure the Back of House door closes tightly. If light is visible under the door, pests can get in.

[] **Beverage Station Deep Clean:** Clean the soda station and nesting areas for personal drinks to prevent sticky residue.

The "Golden Rule" for 2026

Documentation! If you find a problem and fix it, write it on a log. Your health inspector loves seeing that you caught an error and corrected it.

Scan here to unlock for more quiz fun



1. (32°F): Accuracy is the foundation to safety. If your tool is off, your logs are off.
 2. (2 hours): This is the most dangerous stage. Bacteria bloom fastest between 135°F and 70°F.
 3. (Wash & Change): You must wash hands between glove changes to prevent trapping bacteria against your skin.
 4. (Keep It): As long as the establishment system is being used a prepped on date can be used.