

# Food Thermometers

## The Basics

- Color and texture can't tell you if food is safely cooked.
- Cooking foods to a proper internal temperature is the best way to eliminate harmful bacteria.
  - FoodSafety.gov has a [safe minimum internal temperature list](#) for various foods, including meats, eggs, seafood and leftovers.
- Maintain hot foods above 140°F.
- Limit time that perishable foods are kept in the “danger zone” of 40°F–140°F.
- Calibrate your thermometer regularly and clean and sanitize after each use.
- Keep a temperature log and calibration log.

## Using a Food Thermometer

- Ensure the thermometer has been calibrated recently.
- Begin checking the temperature toward the end of cooking.
- After inserting the thermometer into food, wait the recommended amount of time for your type of thermometer before reading the temperature.
- Insert into the thickest part of the food.
- Stir liquid thoroughly before measuring temperature.
- Measure the temperature before removing meat from the heat source.
- Oven-safe thermometers: Can remain in place as the food cooks. Read after one to two minutes. Best for roasts, casseroles and soups.
- Instant-read thermometers: Use to check food towards the end of cooking; these aren't meant to be left in the food while it cooks. Measures instantly, typically in 10 to 20 seconds. Can also use for roasts, casseroles and soup; insert sideways in thin dishes.
- Allow meat to rest for at least three minutes before carving or consuming.

- Clean and sanitize the food thermometer after each use.
- Digital thermometers should be calibrated based on manufacturer specification, which will be different depending on the thermometer. Look for a reset button.

## Calibrating a Food Thermometer: The Freezing Point

### Method

- Fill a glass with crushed ice and water. Let the water sit for a couple minutes so the temperature settles at 32°F.
- Immerse your thermometer in the water and wait for the temperature reading to stabilize.
- Don't let the thermometer touch the cup.
- If the reading is more than 2°F off, adjust it.
- Thermometers that can't be calibrated should be replaced.

### Additional Tips for Calibration

- Thermometers should be calibrated before use, if dropped, when going from one temperature range to another, and after a long storage time.
- Bimetal thermometers (typically oven-safe) should be calibrated before each shift. Look for a calibration nut beneath the display dial. You may need a wrench or pliers to turn the nut.

### For More Information

- Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, "[A Short Guide to Food Thermometers](#)"

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