Serving

- Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold!
- Avoid cross-contamination

Perishable Foods and the Danger Zone

Perishable foods include: meat, poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, dairy products, cooked pasta, cook rice, cooked vegetables, and peeled and/or cut fresh fruits and vegetables. These foods must be kept hot or cold to stay out of the Danger Zone.

The Danger Zone is between 41°F and 140°F, the temperature range where bacteria can multiply quickly. Perishable foods should not be in the Danger Zone for more than 2 hours. (If the room temperature is over 90°F, perishable food should not be out for more than one hour.)

Reheating food

If the food has been cooked ahead of time and chilled, it is important to reheat rapidly and thoroughly to 165°F or hotter before serving. Check temperature using a food thermometer to make sure an adequate temperature is reached. To reheat:

- Place on the range.
- Use the oven, set no lower than 325°F.
- Use the microwave. Be sure to stir, cover and rotate for even heating.

Do not use steam tables, crock pots, chafing dishes, or warming plates to reheat food. Bacteria can multiply if food is heated too slowly.

Keeping foods hot

Cooked or reheated food should be kept at 140°F or higher. An oven, warming trays, heated chafing dishes, or pre-heated steam tables, or slow cookers can be used. However, keeping foods hot over a long period of time can reduce the quality of the food.
Keeping foods cold
Cold foods can be kept at 40°F in refrigerators or in coolers with ice or frozen gel packs until served. When serving, place cold foods on a platter or in a bowl over a bed of ice or frozen gel packs.

Serving Utensils and supplies
Provide appropriate serving utensils for each dish. Have sauces in single-serving portions or in a bottle to avoid “double-dipping”.

Separate Ice
Use separate coolers for to cool drinks and ice for use in beverage cups.

For more information:
- Do It Right! Part 3: Temperature-Time Abuse (video)