PROPER WAYS TO THAW FOODS

Introduction

Thawing or defrosting foods is a critical control point to prevent foodborne illness. During this step take care to avoid cross contamination and exposing food to the temperature danger zone (between 41°F and 135°F).

Critical violation

Improper thawing of potentially hazardous food is a critical (major) violation.

Proper thawing methods

Thawing foods properly can be done in any of these four ways:

1. In a refrigerator at 41°F or colder,
2. Using a microwave,
3. As part of the cooking process, or
4. Under cold running water.

In a refrigerator at 41°F or less

Thaw food in a refrigerator at 41°F or colder. This is one of the safest ways to thaw foods. However, there are a few reminders:

- Be sure to use a drip pan under the food being thawed so that drippings don’t contaminate other foods.
- Thaw raw foods below prepared, ready to eat foods so that drippings don’t contaminate foods.
- Plan ahead. This process can take longer for the frozen foods to thaw, turkey may take 24 hours or more.

Using a microwave

Use a microwave to thaw foods that are to be cooked immediately following the thawing process. Microwave thawing actually begins the cooking process and should be followed by completing the cooking of the food item.

Although thawing foods by a microwave is efficient, it unfortunately is not recommended for large food items.

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### PROPER WAYS TO THAW FOODS, continued

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Instructions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>As part of the cooking process</strong></td>
<td>Frozen foods can also be thawed as part of the cooking process. Foods which work well with this method are frozen vegetables and ground meats.</td>
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<td>• Allow more time than normal to cook and stir the food more often.</td>
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<td>• Check the final internal food temperature with a thermometer to determine that potentially harmful bacteria have been killed.</td>
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<td><strong>Under running water</strong></td>
<td>Another way to thaw frozen foods is under cold running water with water pressure sufficient to flush away loose particles.</td>
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<td>• It is important to limit this method to the food no more than two (2) hours at a water temperature of 75°F (24°C).</td>
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<td>• A clean and sanitized food sink is needed that is separated from a regular wash sink.</td>
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<td>• Avoid cross contamination from the water dripping off the food or splashing onto other foods and preparation sites and utensils.</td>
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### For more information

For more information on food protection, please contact the Environmental Health Division, (916) 875-8440.