

Proper Ways to Thaw Foods

Thawing or defrosting foods is a critical control point to prevent food borne illness. During thawing, take care to avoid cross contamination and to minimize time in the temperature danger zone (between 41 degrees F and 135 degrees F).

Proper Thawing Methods

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

1. In a refrigerator at 41 degrees F or below,
2. Use a microwave,
3. As part of the cooking process, or
4. Under running water.

In a Refrigerator at 41 Degrees F

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

- Be sure to use a drip pan under the food being thawed so that the drippings do not contaminate other foods.
- Thaw raw foods below ready to eat food so that drippings do not contaminate food.
- Plan ahead. This method can take longer for frozen foods; 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 cooking the food item. Although thawing foods by a microwave is efficient, it is not recommended for large food items.

As Part of the Cooking Process

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.

- Allow more time than normal to cook and stir the food more often.
- Check the final internal food temperature with a thermometer to determine that potentially harmful bacteria have been killed.

Under Running Water

Another way to thaw frozen foods is under running water with water pressure sufficient to flush away loose particles.

- It is important to limit this method to no more than two hours at a recommended water temperature of 70 degrees F or below.
- A clean and sanitized food sink separate from hand wash sinks is needed.
- Avoid cross contamination from the water dripping off of the food or splashing onto other foods and preparation surfaces and utensils.