

ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Tips For Using A Food Thermometer

For a long time, consumers have been advised to use a food thermometer when cooking meat and poultry to ensure that a high enough temperature is reached to destroy bacteria.

A food thermometer helps you:

1. cook food to a safe temperature
2. prevent overcooking and get the best flavor
3. take the guesswork out of cooking

I recommend dial thermometers. Dial thermometers have a range of temperatures featured on a round dial on top of a long metal stem. Large dial thermometers are oven-safe and good for large roasts and whole poultry. Smaller instant-read dial thermometers are not designed to stay in an oven, but are used to spot-test food during and at the end of the cooking time. Most dial thermometers sense the temperature along the stem from the tip to about 2 inches up the stem. Most dial thermometers can be checked for accuracy.

There are two ways to check the accuracy of a food thermometer:

1. Fill a glass with finely crushed ice and add 2 inches of water and immerse the thermometer where the tip is fully in the 2 inches of water. The thermometer should read 32°F after 45 seconds.
2. Bring water in a deep pan to a full rolling boil immerse the tip 2 inches in the water. The thermometer should read 212°F after 45 seconds.

Thermometers should be checked periodically. Follow manufacture's recommendations. Some dial thermometers have a calibration nut under the dial that can be adjusted. Check the package for instructions.