

# Food Business Thermometers

The following information is provided to assist food businesses understand the requirements for using thermometers in their business.

## Do I need a thermometer?

It is a requirement of Food Safety Standard 3.2.2 (22) of the Food Standards Code that a food business that handles potentially hazardous food has a temperature measuring device. The device must be readily accessible and must accurately measure the temperature of potentially hazardous food to +/- 1 °C.

If you have several food businesses, such as multiple cafés or a café and a mobile food business, you must ensure that each business has its own thermometer that remains onsite at all times.

## What sort of thermometer do I require?

Different types of thermometers are available. For the purpose of measuring the temperature of food, a digital probe thermometer is required which ensures that internal food temperatures can be measured accurately. Infra-red or laser thermometers are only useful for measuring surface temperatures and are not able to measure the internal temperature of food.

Thermometers with a temperature range of -50°C to 150°C are usually sufficient for measuring the temperature of food.

Do not use thermometers or temperature indicators on cool rooms, hot/cold holding units or other display units as a temperature check, as these indicators measure the temperature of the unit and not the temperature of the food. Meat and coffee thermometers are also unsuitable, as they are generally not accurate to +/-1°C.

## How do I use my thermometer?

To prevent cross-contamination of food it is essential that thermometers are kept clean at all times. The following steps outline the process for measuring the temperature of food:

1. Wash away any food or other visible contaminants on the probe.
2. Sanitise the probe with a food grade sanitiser, alcohol wipes or hot water (77°C or hotter for at least 30 seconds).
3. Allow the probe to air dry or wipe with single use paper towel.
4. Insert the probe into the thickest part of the food. Wait until the temperature stabilises before noting the measurement (liquid foods such as soups should be stirred before measuring the temperature).
5. Make sure the probe is clean, washed and sanitised between each temperature measurement, taking extra care when measuring between raw and ready-to-eat foods.

If taking temperatures of hot and cold foods using the same probe thermometer, your thermometer should be allowed to return to ambient temperature between testing the next food item to prevent inaccurate measurements.

## Do I have to record temperatures?

For some businesses, it is a requirement of the Food Standards Code that they have a food safety plan and record regular temperatures as specified in their plan. If your business is not required to have a food safety plan, we still strongly recommend that your food business records all your

temperatures. Food businesses with poor temperature control practices may be directed by an Environmental Health Officer to implement temperature recording. Basic temperature recording templates are available in the Food Safety [Program Template Records for Retails and Food Service Business](#) produced by the Department of Health and Human Services.

### **How do I know if my thermometer is accurate to +/- 1°C?**

It is important to regularly check your thermometer to make sure it is accurate to +/-1°C and that it complies with the requirement of the Food Safety Standard.

#### Ice slurry method:

1. Half fill a cup with ice.
2. Add enough cold water that the ice is covered but not enough to make the ice float.
3. Stir the ice slurry and let stand for 2-3 minutes.
4. Insert your probe thermometer into the ice slurry and wait for 2 minutes (do not let the probe touch the bottom of the glass).
5. Wait for the temperature to stabilise and record the reading, repeat this a further two times.
6. The thermometer should read 0°C (-1°C to 1°C) to comply with the requirements of the Food Safety Standard.
7. If the thermometer reading is outside of -1°C to 1°C then it must be repaired or replaced.



#### Boiling water method:

1. Bring a pot of water to the boil;
2. Insert your probe thermometer into the boiling water and wait for 2-3 minutes (do not let the probe touch the bottom of the pot);
3. Wait for the temperature to stabilise and record the reading, repeat this a further two times;
4. The thermometer should read 100°C (99°C to 101°C) to comply with the requirements of the Food Safety Standard.
5. If the thermometer reading is outside of 99°C to 101°C then it must be repaired or replaced.



### **Maintaining your thermometer**

Food businesses should calibrate and check their thermometer every 12 months, at minimum.

Thermometers that have been dropped or roughly handled may no longer be accurate as the sensitive probe may have been damaged. If you suspect your thermometer may have been damaged, check its accuracy using one of the methods above or replace it.

Businesses should also ensure that spare batteries suitable for your thermometer are kept onsite and that the battery is regularly checked and changed.

### **Further information**

For further information please contact us on (03) 6323 3000 or visit our website at [www.launceston.tas.gov.au](http://www.launceston.tas.gov.au)