

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP): Food Preparation, Storage, and Safety Protocols

This SOP details **food preparation, storage, and safety protocols**, encompassing guidelines for hygienic food handling, temperature control during cooking and refrigeration, proper storage methods to prevent contamination, cross-contamination prevention techniques, sanitation of equipment and work surfaces, allergen management, and compliance with food safety regulations. The objective is to maintain high standards of food safety and quality, ensuring the health and well-being of consumers.

1. Scope

This SOP applies to all personnel involved in the receipt, preparation, handling, storage, and service of food items within the facility.

2. Responsibilities

- Food Handlers:** Follow all procedures for hygienic handling, preparation, and storage.
- Supervisors/Managers:** Monitor compliance, provide training, and maintain documentation.
- Sanitation Staff:** Clean and sanitize all work areas and equipment based on outlined schedules.

3. Hygienic Food Handling

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before handling food, after handling raw products, or after any activity that may contaminate hands.
- Wear clean uniforms, aprons, and head coverings/hairnets at all times.
- Use gloves when handling ready-to-eat foods, changing them when soiled or after handling raw items.
- Limit jewelry to plain wedding bands; no watches or bracelets permitted during food preparation.

4. Temperature Control

Cooking:

- Cook foods to the following minimum internal temperatures:

| Food Type | Minimum Temperature |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Poultry (whole or ground) | 74Â°C (165Â°F) |
| Ground meat, eggs | 71Â°C (160Â°F) |
| Pork, beef, lamb, fish | 63Â°C (145Â°F) |
| Reheated leftovers | 74Â°C (165Â°F) |

Cold Holding & Storage:

- Refrigerate perishable foods at or below 4°C (40°F).
- Freeze foods at or below -18°C (0°F).
- Record refrigerator and freezer temperatures at least twice daily.

Hot Holding:

- Keep hot foods at or above 60°C (140°F) until served.

5. Proper Storage Methods

- Store raw meats below cooked and ready-to-eat foods to prevent dripping/contamination.
- Keep foods in clean, labeled, covered containers.
- Practice FIFO (First-In, First-Out) to ensure oldest stock is used first.
- Store chemicals, cleaning agents, and personal items separately from food.

6. Cross-Contamination Prevention

- Use separate cutting boards, utensils, and equipment for raw and cooked foods; color-coded systems are recommended.
- Immediately clean and sanitize surfaces and tools after contact with raw foods.
- Avoid direct hand contact with cooked or ready-to-eat foods (use utensils or gloves).

7. Sanitation of Equipment and Work Surfaces

- Clean food contact surfaces with appropriate detergents and sanitize regularly, especially after exposure to raw foods.
- Follow manufacturer instructions for concentration and contact time of sanitizers.
- Sanitize dishes, utensils, and equipment after each use.

8. Allergen Management

- Identify and label all major allergens in food products.
- Store allergen-containing foods separately and use designated utensils for their preparation.
- Communicate allergen information clearly to staff and consumers.
- Clean and sanitize prep areas between tasks to prevent allergen cross-contact.

9. Compliance with Regulations

- Comply with all local and national food safety legislation and guidelines (e.g., FDA Food Code, HACCP principles).
- Maintain accurate records of food temperatures, cleaning schedules, and staff training.
- Participate in regular food safety audits and inspections.

10. Training and Documentation

- All staff must receive initial and ongoing training on food safety procedures.
- Keep written records of training sessions, cleaning schedules, and temperature logs for a minimum of one year.

11. References

- Local and national food safety codes
- Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Food Code
- Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) Guidelines