SOP: Guidelines for Food Preparation and Cooking Temperatures

This SOP provides **guidelines for food preparation and cooking temperatures** to ensure food safety and prevent foodborne illnesses. It includes proper handling, thawing, cooking, and cooling techniques, recommended internal cooking temperatures for various foods, cross-contamination prevention, and hygienic practices. The goal is to maintain food quality and safety throughout the preparation and cooking process.

1. Food Handling & Personal Hygiene

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before and after handling food.
- Use clean gloves or utensils to handle ready-to-eat foods.
- Keep nails trimmed and avoid wearing jewelry during food preparation.
- Report and exclude sick employees from food handling tasks.

2. Thawing Techniques

- Thaw frozen foods in the refrigerator, under cold running water, or in the microwave immediately before cooking.
- Do not thaw foods at room temperature.

3. Cooking Temperatures

Use a calibrated food thermometer to check internal temperatures. Cook foods to the minimum recommended internal temperature shown below:

Food item	Minimum Internal Temperature
Poultry (whole, parts, ground)	165°F (74°C)
Ground meats (beef, pork, lamb, veal)	160°F (71°C)
Beef, pork, lamb, veal (steaks, chops, roasts)	145°F (63°C) + 3 minute rest
Seafood (fish, shellfish)	145°F (63°C)
Egg dishes	160°F (71°C)
Leftovers, casseroles	165°F (74°C)

4. Cooling and Storage

- Cool hot foods from 135°F (57°C) to 70°F (21°C) within 2 hours, and from 70°F (21°C) to 41°F (5°C) within 4 hours.
- Store cold foods at ≤41°F (5°C); hot foods at ≥135°F (57°C).
- Label and date leftovers; discard after 7 days or sooner if spoilage is detected.

5. Cross-Contamination Prevention

- Use separate cutting boards and utensils for raw and cooked foods.
- Clean and sanitize surfaces and equipment after each use.
- Store raw foods below ready-to-eat foods in the refrigerator.

6. Documentation & Records

- Record cooking and cooling temperatures during food preparation.
- Maintain logs for corrective actions taken when standard procedures are not met.

References

- U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Food Code
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Food Safety Guidelines