

SOP Template: Proper Cooking and Cooling Methods

This SOP details **proper cooking and cooling methods** to ensure food safety and prevent foodborne illnesses. It includes guidelines for achieving correct cooking temperatures to eliminate harmful bacteria, methods for rapid cooling to inhibit microbial growth, and appropriate storage practices to maintain food quality. Adhering to these procedures safeguards consumers by minimizing contamination risks during food preparation and handling.

1. Purpose

To outline standardized procedures for the safe cooking, cooling, and storage of food items to minimize the risk of foodborne illness.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all kitchen and food handling staff involved in cooking, cooling, and storing potentially hazardous foods.

3. Responsibilities

- **Food Handlers:** Adhere to all cooking, cooling, and storage procedures as outlined.
- **Supervisors:** Train staff, monitor compliance, and maintain necessary records.

4. Proper Cooking Methods

- Use calibrated food thermometers to check internal temperatures.
- Cook foods to minimum internal temperatures as specified:

Food Type	Minimum Internal Temperature	Holding Time
Poultry (whole or ground)	74Â°C (165Â°F)	15 seconds
Ground meats (beef, pork, lamb)	68Â°C (155Â°F)	15 seconds
Seafood	63Â°C (145Â°F)	15 seconds
Eggs (for immediate service)	63Â°C (145Â°F)	15 seconds
Roasts	63Â°C (145Â°F)	4 minutes
Reheated food (for hot holding)	74Â°C (165Â°F)	15 seconds

- Visually inspect foods to confirm complete cooking (no pink, clear juices, etc.).
- Record all cooking temperatures and monitoring checks.

5. Proper Cooling Methods

- Cool foods as quickly as possible using one or more of the following methods:
 - Divide food into smaller portions, shallow pans (no more than 5 cm/2 inch deep).
 - Place food in an ice bath or use ice paddles for rapid cooling.
 - Stir frequently to distribute heat evenly.
 - Vent containers before covering in refrigeration.
- Follow the two-stage cooling process:
 1. Reduce food temperature from **60Â°C (140Â°F) to 21Â°C (70Â°F)** within 2 hours.
 2. Further cool from **21Â°C (70Â°F) to 5Â°C (41Â°F)** or below within an additional 4 hours.
- Do not leave foods at room temperature longer than necessary.
- Use blast chillers when available for large batches.
- Record cooling times and temperatures on the monitoring log.

6. Storage Practices

- Store cooled foods in covered, labeled containers.
- Refrigerate foods at or below **5Â°C (41Â°F)**, and freeze at or below **-18Â°C (0Â°F)**.

- Ensure proper air circulation in refrigerated units.
- Use the first-in, first-out (FIFO) method for inventory rotation.
- Monitor storage temperatures regularly and log results.

7. Monitoring and Record-Keeping

- Document all cooking, cooling, and storage temperatures and times on official logs.
- Review records daily; report and address deviations immediately.

8. Corrective Actions

- If foods do not reach required cooking temperature, continue cooking and re-check.
- If foods do not cool quickly enough, re-cool using alternate methods or discard.
- Report and address equipment malfunctions immediately.

9. Training

- All staff must receive training on cooking and cooling SOP requirements during orientation and as part of ongoing food safety education.