FDA Food Code 2017: A Summary of Changes

The FDA Food Code was updated in late 2017. National Registry's food manager certification exam is based on the FDA Food Code, the latest science in food safety, and best practices in the industry. While many of the changes in the Food Code do not directly affect the content in National Registry's exam program, some do. This document identifies the most relevant content changes to the Food Code. For a full list of changes, see www.FDA.gov.

» The requirement that the person in charge become a Certified Food Protection Manager was added.

The FDA Food Code requires that the person in charge of a foodservice operation become a Certified Food Protection Manager. That person must be onsite at all times during operating hours. A Certified Food Protection Manager must show that he or she has the required knowledge by passing a test from an accredited program. The program must be accredited by an agency approved by a Conference for Food Protection.

Passing the National Registry Food Manager Certification Examination meets this requirement. But, why is it so important to become certified?

A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study suggests that the presence of a Certified Food Protection Manager reduces the risk of a foodborne illness outbreak for an establishment. The study also suggests that it was a distinguishing factor between restaurants that experienced a foodborne illness outbreak and those that had not. In addition, the FDA's Retail Food Risk Factor Studies suggest that the presence of a certified manager has a positive correlation with more effective control of certain risk factors, such as poor personal hygiene, in different facility types.

» A requirement was added that managers ensure food handlers are regularly monitoring food temperatures during hot and cold holding.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommends that regulatory authorities hold the person in charge of a foodservice operation responsible for ensuring the following standards are met:

- Food handlers are regularly monitoring food temperatures during hot and cold holding.

» The requirement for covering a wound or boil on the hand, finger, or wrist has been further clarified.

If the wound or boil is located on the hand, finger, or wrist:

1. Cover it with an impermeable cover like a finger cot or bandage. Impermeable means that liquid from the wound cannot pass through the cover.
2. Then place a single-use glove over the cover.

» A requirement was added regarding the separation of raw meat, poultry, and seafood from unwashed and ready-to-eat fruits and vegetables.

Separate raw meat, poultry, and seafood from unwashed and ready-to-eat fruits and vegetables. Do this during storage, preparation, holding, and display to prevent cross-contamination.

» A requirement was added for packaging fish using a reduced oxygen packaging method.

If you are packaging fish using a reduced-oxygen packaging method, the fish must:

- Be frozen before, during, or after packaging.
- Include a label that states the fish must be frozen until used.

» A requirement was added for submitting a HACCP plan when applying for a variance to prepare food in specific ways.

When applying for a variance, your regulatory authority may require you to submit a HACCP plan.

- The HACCP plan must account for any food safety risks related to the way you plan to prep the food item.
- You must comply with the HACCP plan and procedures submitted.
- You must maintain and provide records requested by the regulatory authority which show that you are regularly:
  – Following procedures for monitoring Critical Control Points
  – Monitoring the Critical Control Points
  – Verifying the effectiveness of the operation or process
  – Taking the necessary corrective actions if there is a failure at a critical control point

The minimum internal cooking time and temperature requirements for specific types of food have been revised.

165°F (74°C) for <1 second (Instantaneous)
- Poultry—including whole or ground chicken, turkey, or duck
- Stuffing made with fish, meat, or poultry
- Stuffed meat, seafood, poultry, or pasta
- Dishes that include previously cooked TCS ingredients (raw ingredients should be cooked to their required minimum internal temperatures)

155°F (68°C) for 17 seconds
- Ground meat—including beef, pork, and other meat
- Injected meat—including brined ham and flavor-injected roasts
- Mechanically tenderized meat
- Ground meat from game animals commercially raised and inspected
- Ratites (mostly flightless birds with flat breastbones)—including ostrich and emu
- Ground seafood—including chopped or minced seafood
- Shell eggs that will be hot held for service

135°F (57°C) (no minimum time)
- Food from plants, including fruits, vegetables, grains (e.g., rice, pasta), and legumes (e.g., beans, refried beans) that will be hot held for service

The requirement that managers ensure food handlers are regularly monitoring food temperatures during hot and cold holding was added.

Time: Make sure that food handlers are regularly monitoring food temperatures during hot and cold holding. Food temperatures should be checked at least every four hours. Follow these guidelines.

- Throw out food that is not 41°F (5°C) or lower or 135°F (57°C) or higher.
- You can also check the temperature every two hours. This will leave time for corrective action. For example, hot TCS food that has been held below 135°F (57°C) can be reheated and then placed back in the hot-holding unit.

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» Requirements for displaying or holding TCS food without temperature control were added.

If your operation displays or holds TCS food without temperature control, it must do so under certain conditions. This includes:

- preparing written procedures and getting written approval in advance by the regulatory authority
- maintaining those procedures in the operation
- making sure those procedures are made available to the regulatory authority on request.

There are other conditions that may apply. Also note that the conditions for holding cold food are different from those for holding hot food. Before using time as a method of control, check with your local regulatory authority for specific requirements.

» The requirement to make cleaners available to employees during all hours of operation was added.

Cleaners must be stable, noncorrosive, and safe to use. They must also be provided and available to employees during all hours of operation. There are a variety of cleaners available, each with a different purpose.

These include:
- Detergents
- Degreasers
- Delimers
- Abrasive cleaners

» The requirement to make sanitizers available to employees during all hours of operation was added.

Three common types of chemical sanitizers are chlorine, iodine, and quaternary ammonium compounds, or quats. Chemical sanitizers are regulated by state and federal environmental protection agencies. They must be provided and available to employees during all hours of operation.

» The requirement to have written procedures for cleaning up vomit and diarrhea in the operation was added.

To be effective, operations must have written procedures for cleaning up vomit and diarrhea. These procedures must address specific actions that employees must take to minimize contamination and exposure to food, surfaces, and people. It is critical that employees be trained on these procedures.