

# Food Thermometers

Everyone needs one in the kitchen

## Why use a food thermometer?

- A food thermometer helps cook and hold food at a safe temperature and prevents overcooking and foodborne illness.
- A food thermometer is the only way to make sure cooked food is safe.

## When do I use a food thermometer?

- A food thermometer should be used when you cook meat, poultry, fish, casseroles, stuffing and egg dishes, as well as when you reheat leftovers.

## Where do I put a food thermometer in food?

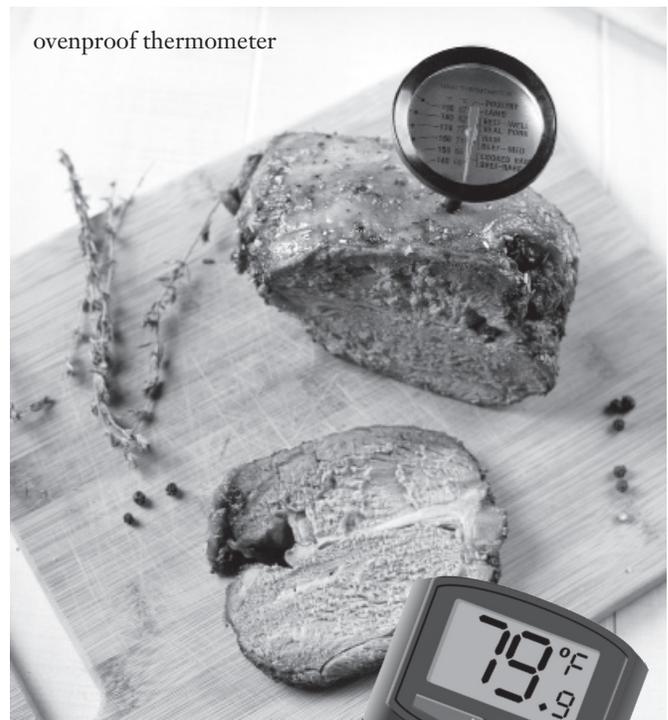
- Insert the food thermometer in the thickest part of the food, away from pan edges and away from bone, fat or gristle.
  - Poultry: Insert into both the inner thigh area near the breast and into the breast itself of the chicken or turkey, without touching the bone.
  - Ground meat or poultry: Insert into the thickest area, inserting sideways in thin items like patties. Just because meat is brown does not necessarily mean it is safe to eat.
  - Beef, pork, lamb, veal, ham, roasts, steaks or chops: If irregularly shaped, check temperature in several places.
  - Stuffing, egg dishes: Insert into the thickest part.

## Safety tips

- When you reheat food, the temperature needs to reach 165 degrees F. Bring soups and gravies to a rolling boil.
- After each use, wash the stem section of the food thermometer with hot, soapy water.

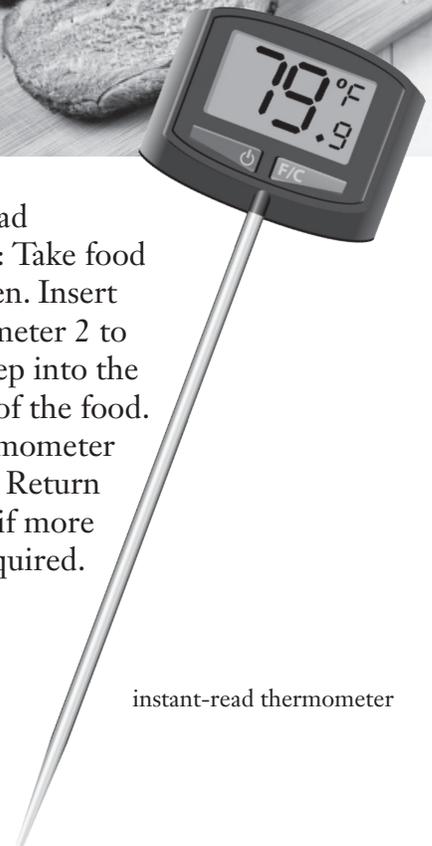
## How do I use a food thermometer?

- An ovenproof thermometer: Insert food thermometer 2 to 2½ inches deep into the thickest part of the food. Put the food in the oven. Keep the thermometer in the food throughout cooking.



ovenproof thermometer

- An instant-read thermometer: Take food out of the oven. Insert food thermometer 2 to 2½ inches deep into the thickest part of the food. Remove thermometer after reading. Return food to oven if more cooking is required.



instant-read thermometer

## What temperatures do I use to tell me the food is safe to eat?

Ground beef, veal, lamb, pork	160° F
Poultry Ground chicken, turkey Whole chicken, turkey Poultry parts	165° F 165° F 165° F
Beef, veal, lamb, pork (roasts, steaks, chops)	145° F*
Ham Fresh (raw) Precooked, to reheat Reheated	145° F* 140° F 165° F
Stuffing (cooked alone or in turkey)	165° F
Egg dishes like custards Eggs	160° F Cook until yolk and white are firm
Fish Thick steak Thin filet	145° F Flakes with a fork
Leftovers, casseroles	165° F
Hot dogs, luncheon meats, cold cuts and other deli-style meats	Heat until steaming hot (165° F)**

\* After the product has reached 145 degrees F, remove from the heat source and let rest for three minutes before cutting and eating.

\*\* Although fully cooked, these foods can become contaminated with bacteria, particularly *Listeria monocytogenes*. People who are most vulnerable to this bacteria are pregnant women, babies, older adults and those with weak immune systems.

## Calibrating a food thermometer

- Calibrating a thermometer is how you check to see if it is measuring the temperature correctly.
- How often do you calibrate a thermometer? Whenever you drop it and when you first get it. If you use it often, check it once a month. If you haven't used it in a while, check it again.

## Ice water method

- Fill a large glass with crushed ice.
- Add clean tap water to the top of the ice and stir well.
- Put the food thermometer stem a minimum of 2 inches into the ice-water mixture. Do not let the thermometer touch the sides or bottom of the glass. Wait 30 seconds before adjusting. (Some thermometers can be adjusted by turning a nut under the head of the thermometer).
- Without removing the stem from the ice, hold the adjusting nut under the thermometer's head and turn the head so the pointer reads 32 degrees F.

Adapted from: "Pass the Taste Test...Use a Thermometer!," University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension and latest information from FightBAC online at [fightbac.org/content/view/93/2/](http://fightbac.org/content/view/93/2/) (accessed 6/09)