



# Retail Food Safety Resource Guide

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or scan the QR Code  
to access an electronic version  
of this guide (including revisions)  
and other food protection resources



**Chatham Health District**

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[www.chathamhealth.org](http://www.chathamhealth.org)

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## Background and Purpose

For many people, foodborne illness only causes discomfort or lost time from work. However, for some, like young children, older adults, individuals in health care facilities, and those with impaired immune systems, foodborne illness is more serious and can be deadly.

Studies have identified the following five major risk factors related to employee behaviors and preparation practices at retail and food service establishments that contribute to foodborne illness:

- Food from unsafe sources
- Improper holding (time and temperature)
- Inadequate cooking
- Poor employee health & hygiene
- Contaminated equipment / protection from contamination

In 2022, Chatham Health District conducted a foodborne illness risk factor survey of retail food service establishments in our district. The survey will be repeated every 5 years to track changes in the prevalence of identified issues and to identify emerging issues that may require attention. The next survey will be completed in 2027.

The purpose of this guide is to provide training and resources to help food service establishments licensed by Chatham Health District reduce the prevalence of risk factors and associated behaviors and reduce the incidence of foodborne illness.

# Codes and Statutes

**Click or scan below to access the cited code or statute**

**CT General Statutes Related to Retail Food (19a-36)**



**2024 Supplement to CT General Statutes**



**Regulations of CT State Agencies 19a-36h**  
**Model Food Code Implementation**



**2022 FDA Food Code**



**Supplement to 2022 FDA Food Code**



**Chatham Health District Food Service Ordinance**



# Risk Factor Categories

1. Food from Unsafe Sources
2. Improper Holding/Time and Temperature
  - a. Date Marking
3. Inadequate Cooking
4. Poor Employee Health & Hygiene
5. Contaminated Equipment/Protection from Contamination
  - a. Allergens
  - b. Cleaning and Sanitizing
  - c. Protection from Contamination

## 1: Food from Unsafe Sources

### **Why does this matter?**

Food from unregulated sources may be unsafe because they are at an increased risk of spoilage or physical, biological or chemical contamination and may pose a risk to the health of consumers.



**Some things our inspector may ask related to**  
**UNSAFE SOURCES**

- How do you verify that the food you receive is from an approved source?
- Do you have purchase specifications for specific food items?
- Do you have any food products that require the supplier to sign a certificate of conformance with your operation?
- What method do you use to verify the source of your shellfish?
- How frequently do you have food delivered to your facility?
- Have you established specific times of the day when food is to be delivered to your facility, or do you work within the parameters of the supplier's schedule?
- Who is responsible for checking food delivered to the facility?
- What do you check when food is delivered to your establishment?
- How do you know if the food is at the proper temperature when it is received?
- Do you maintain any receiving logs?
- What system do you have in place to ensure that the fish you serve raw or undercooked has been frozen to destroy parasites?



## 2: Improper Holding/Time and Temperature (Updated 2024)

### **Why does this matter?**

Proper holding temperatures and time are important in controlling the growth of bacteria that can cause illness or spoilage.

You need to keep cold food cold and hot food hot.



**Some things our inspector may ask related to**  
**HOLDING TIME AND TEMPERATURE**

**Cold**

- How do you monitor your refrigeration units to ensure they are maintaining proper temperature?
- Are there any refrigeration/cold food storage units located outside of the kitchen area (salad bars, food transportation units, etc.)?
- Do you use methods, other than storing under refrigeration, to keep foods cold (e.g. storage in ice)?
- What kind of monitoring procedures do you use to ensure food is at the proper cold holding temperature?
- What type of equipment is used to check food temperatures? How often? How do you know your temperature measuring devices are accurate?
- Do you keep temperature logs? Do you record the temperature of the refrigeration units, product temperatures, or both? (not required per the Food Code)
- How do employees know what food is to be used first (first in, first out)?
- What is your date marking procedure for ready-to-eat, TCS Food?

**Hot**

- How are cooked foods held until service?
- How is the temperature of hot foods controlled? Steam table, stove/oven, hot box?
- Are there any hot food storage units located outside of the kitchen area (hot food bars, food transportation units, etc.)?
- What kind of monitoring procedures do you use to ensure food is at the proper hot holding temperature?
- What type of equipment do you use to check the food product temperatures? How often is this done? How do you know your temperature measuring devices are accurate?
- Do you keep temperature logs? Do you record the temperature of the hot holding units, product temperatures, or both?
- What corrective actions do you take when food is found out of temperature?

## 2.a: DATE MARKING (Updated 2024)

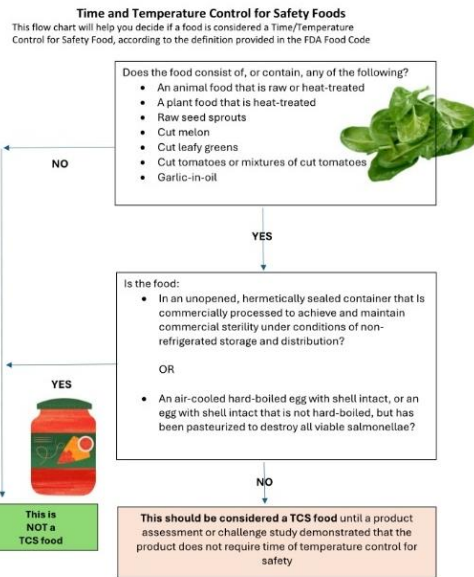
### Why does this matter?

Proper date marking identifies the date or day by which food must be consumed, sold, or discarded to avoid illness associated with growth of *Listeria monocytogenes*. Date marking rules apply to Time/Temperature Control for Safety (TCS) foods that are Ready-To-Eat (RTE).

### What is TIME/TEMPERATURE CONTROL for SAFETY (TCS) Food?



Graphic by StateFoodSafety at <https://www.statefoodsafety.com/Resources/Recursos/time-temperature-control-for-safety-tcs-foods-poster>



[Download the TCS Flow Chart](#)



### What is READY-TO-EAT (RTE) food?



### Examples of DATE MARKING labels





**Some things our inspector may ask you related to**  
**DATE MARKING**

- What is your date marking procedure for RTE, TCS Food?
- If you have open packages of RTE, TCS food, what is the longest you would keep it?
- Do you have a system for keeping track of these foods if you freeze them?
- How are your employees trained on date marking procedures?

***Note: If an item requires date marking and the inspector finds that it is not properly date marked, the Food Code requires that you throw it away.***



# Chatham Health District

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## Date Marking Guidance for Food Establishments

The purpose of this guide is to provide a summary of the Date Marking criteria that is now required under the FDA Food Code, Chapter 3-501.17. Date Marking requirements apply to many Ready-to-Eat (RTE), Time/Temperature Controlled for Safety (TCS) food(s).

### Why is Date Marking important?

Date marking is a means of controlling the growth of *Listeria monocytogenes*, which is a bacterium that continues to grow, even under refrigeration. Date marking is a process of assuring the food is discarded before these bacteria can cause foodborne illness.

### What foods must be Date Marked?

Other than the foods exempt from Date Marking, all Ready-to-Eat, TCS foods that are held under refrigeration for more than 24 hours **must** be date marked.

#### **Ready-to-Eat, TCS foods, including both:**

1. Commercially prepared and/or
2. Prepared onsite and held under refrigeration for more than 24 hours.

#### **Exemptions from Date Marking requirements:**

1. Individual meal portions served or repackaged for sale from a bulk container upon consumer request
2. Shellstock
3. Any of the following foods if prepared and packaged by an inspected food process plant:

- Deli salads
- Hard cheeses
- Semi-soft cheeses
- Cultured dairy products
- Preserved fish
- Shelf stable dry fermented sausages
- Shelf stable salt-cured meats

### How do I Date Mark?

A food establishment operator may choose any date marking system that suits their needs. Any system is acceptable, provided it is:

- Understandable
- Effective
- Consistent

Food must be discarded within 7 days; **the day of preparation is counted as day 1.** (Food prepared on April 1 must be discarded on April 7.) **A written policy for employees to follow is strongly recommended.**

### What if I combine foods that were opened on different dates?

When different containers of foods are combined, the date of the oldest ingredient becomes the reference date. For example, if today is Wednesday, and you are mixing salad marked on a Monday with salad marked on a Tuesday, the combined salad marking would be based on the starting date of Monday.

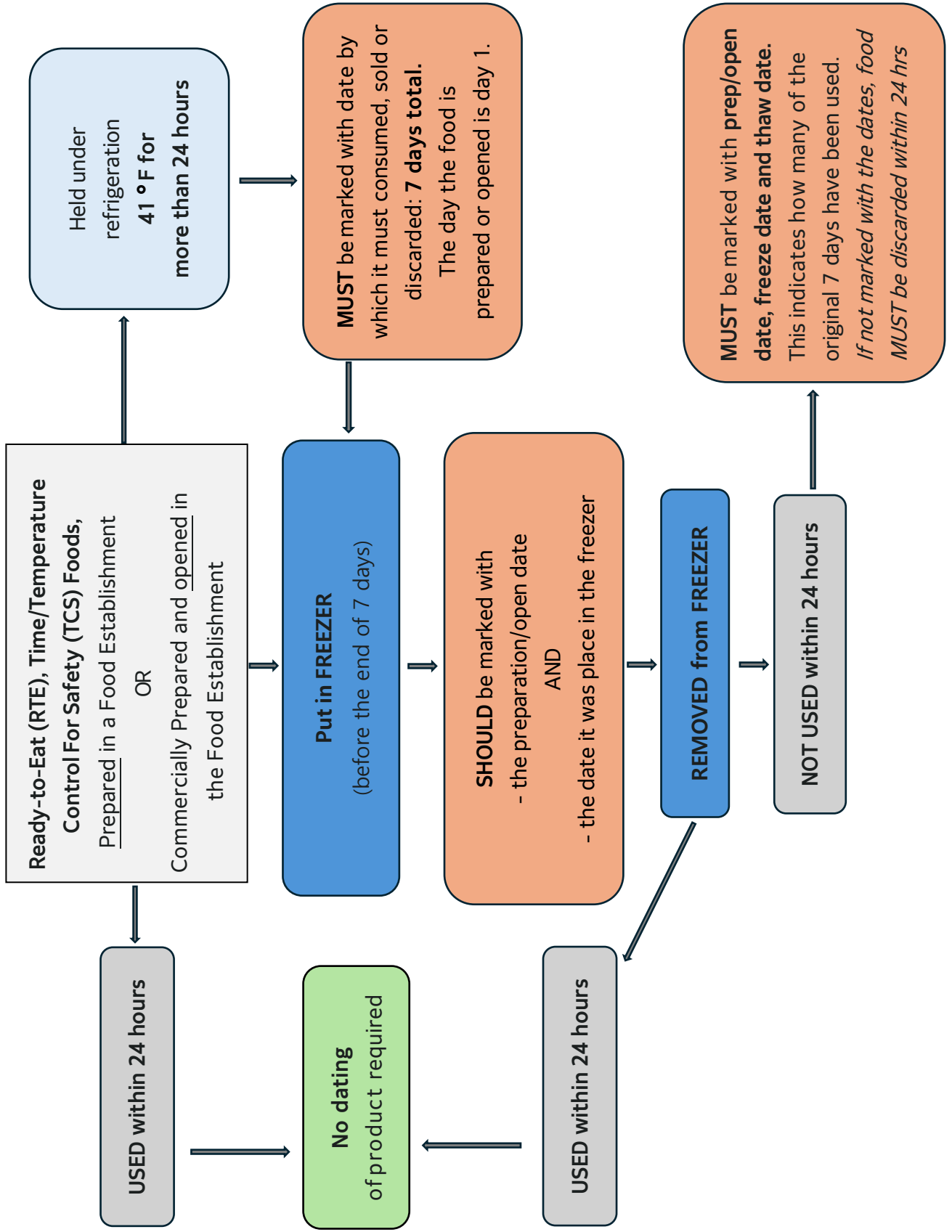
### What if I freeze the food?

- Freezing the food stops the date marking clock but does NOT reset it.
- If a food is stored at 41°F for 2 days and then frozen at 0°F, it can be safely stored at 41°F for 5 more days after removal from the freezer.
- The **freezing date and the thawing date** must be provided on the container **along with the preparation date** to indicate how many of the original 7 days have expired.

**NOTE:** Any RTE, TCS foods that are not date marked properly or exceed the temperature and time combination may be discarded.

Special thanks to Farmington Valley Health District for creating this poster.

# DATE MARKING



### 3: Inadequate Cooking

#### **Why does this matter?**

Failure to fully cook foods to the required temperature and time can allow bacteria and other pathogens to survive in the food and cause illness.

PRODUCTS	CRITICAL LIMITS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poultry</li> <li>• Wild Game Animals (live-caught or field dressed)</li> <li>• <u>STUFFED</u> fish, meat (including, but not limited to, pork), poultry, ratites, or pasta containing fish, meat, poultry, or ratites</li> <li>• <u>STUFFING</u> containing fish, meat, poultry, or ratites</li> </ul>	<p>165°F instantaneous 7-log reduction of <i>Salmonella</i> (or 7D kill)</p>
<p><b>Microwave Cooking</b> – for raw animal foods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covered, rotated, or stirred throughout or midway through the cooking process and held covered for 2 minutes</li> </ul>	<p>165°F with 2-minute post-cooking hold (7D kills of <i>Salmonella</i>)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>COMMINUTED</u> fish, ground beef, or other meats</li> <li>• <u>RAW SHELL EGGS</u> – not prepared for immediate service (combined or hot held). (Also see highly susceptible populations)</li> <li>• Ratites</li> <li>• Mechanically tenderized and injected meats</li> </ul>	<p>155°F for 17 seconds OR 158°F for &lt;1 second OR 150°F for 1 minute OR 145°F for 3 minutes (5D kill of <i>Salmonella</i>)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raw shell egg prepared for immediate service</li> <li>• Commercially raised game animals</li> <li>• Other raw animals not otherwise specified in this table</li> </ul>	<p>145°F for 14 seconds  (3D kill of <i>Salmonella</i>)</p>
<p><u>WHOLE MUSCLE, INTACT BEEF STEAK</u> that has been properly labeled as such may be served undercooked as ready-to-eat if not serving a highly susceptible population</p>	<p>Surface temperature <math>\geq</math>145°F and cooked color change on all external surfaces</p>
<p><u>PLANT FOOD FOR HOT HOLDING</u>: plant foods requiring time/temperature control for safety that will be hot held</p>	<p>135°F – cooked to the hot holding temperature</p>





## **Some things our inspector may ask you related to** **COOKING**

- Are specific procedures in place for cooking foods?
- Are the cooking procedures product-specific (roasts, hamburgers, etc.)?
- Are any cooking procedures based on equipment temperature for a set amount of time?
- Is slow cook process used for any of the food products (like roasts)?
- Do you receive steaks from whole muscle intact beef? Is there labeling to document this?
- Does the staff know the correct cooking temperatures?
- Are raw animal foods cooked to customer order (i.e., rare, medium-rare, medium, or well-done)? If yes, what food items?
- If raw animal foods are intentionally undercooked or served raw, does the establishment have a proper consumer advisory?
- Are there any meats that are partially cooked and cooled in preparation for large volume preparation later?
- How are cooking temperatures monitored?
- What type of equipment is used to measure the final internal product cooking temperatures?
- What actions do employees take when food does not reach the proper temperature?
- Are cooking logs maintained (although not required per the Food Code)?



## 4: Poor Employee Health & Hygiene

### **Why does this matter?**

One of the leading causes of foodborne illness outbreaks is poor employee health and hygiene. Employees working while ill, improper handwashing techniques and improper glove use increase the risk of contamination of foods that they prepare or handle leading to foodborne illness.



**Some things our inspector may ask you related to**  
**POOR EMPLOYEE HEALTH & HYGIENE**

- What kind of policy do you have in place for handling sick employees?
- Is there a written policy? (Note: a written policy is not required in the Food Code, but having a written policy may give an indication of the formality of the policy being discussed.)
- Describe how managers and food employees are made knowledgeable about their duties and responsibilities under the employee health policy.
- Are food employees asked if they are experiencing certain symptoms or illnesses upon conditional offer of employment? If so, what symptoms or illnesses are food employees asked about? Is there a written record of this inquiry?
- What are employees instructed to do when they are sick?
- What conditions or symptoms are reported?
- What may some indicators be of someone who is working while ill?
- When are employees restricted from working with exposed food or food contact surfaces? When are they excluded from working in the food establishment?
- For employees that are sick and cannot come to work, what policy is in place for allowing them to return and for notifying the regulatory authority?
- How do employees know when to wash their hands and what method to use?
- What type of system do you have in place to ensure employees wash their hands when you expect them to do so?
- Who is responsible for checking to see that employees practice good handwashing procedures?
- What action is taken when an employee is observed not washing their hands when you expect them to do so?
- What type of system do you have in place to ensure that hand sinks are continually stocked with hand soap and paper towels (or hand drying devices)?
- Do you use any techniques or methods to encourage employees to wash their hands?
- Do you maintain any type of documentation that attempts to monitor employees' handwashing within the kitchen area?
- Where do you prepare your salads?

- At what times of day do you prepare salads, sliced fruits, or prepare cold-cut lunch meat sandwiches?
- Who is responsible for expediting the bread rolls and salads to the customer? Where does this process take place?
- What procedures are employees expected to follow when working with ready-to-eat foods?
- Can you describe the system you have in place to ensure employees that work with ready-to-eat foods follow your operational procedures?
- What action would be taken if you observed one of your food employees handling ready-to-eat foods with their bare hands?
- Do you slice, wash, or prepare any ready-to-eat foods that will be subsequently added as an ingredient to a food product that will be cooked?
- Do you conduct any ready-to-eat food processes for which an alternative procedure is in place to no bare hand contact? Is this alternative procedure in written form? Can you describe the alternative procedure? Have you submitted it to the health department for review?
- How do you know which foods can be touched with bare hands?

## 5: Contaminated Equipment/Protection from Contamination (Updated 2024)

### **Why does this matter?**

Protecting food from contamination helps ensure the safety and quality of the meals you serve, which helps maintain your customers' health and your business's reputation. By keeping equipment clean and following safety practices, you can prevent foodborne illnesses and build trust with your patrons.



**Some things our inspector may ask you related to**  
**CONTAMINATED EQUIPMENT PROTECTION FROM CONTAMINATION**

- Describe your system for storing raw animal foods in the walk-in cooler?
- Where are ready-to-eat foods that require refrigeration stored before service?
- How do food employees know which food products go on what shelves in the walk-in cooler?
- What steps do you use to prevent cross-contamination in the food preparation area?
- How do you verify that foods are being stored, prepared, held, and displayed to prevent cross-contamination? How often is this verification done?

## 5.a: ALLERGENS (Updated 2024)

### Why does this matter?

People with food allergies can get very sick and even die if they are exposed to something they are allergic to. People with food allergies rely on labelling and notifications to help them avoid foods they are allergic to.

More than 90% of food allergies are caused by the following foods:

- Milk
- Egg
- Fish (such as bass, flounder, or cod)
- Crustacean shellfish (such as crab, lobster, or shrimp)
- Tree nuts (such as almonds, pecans, or walnuts)
- Wheat
- Peanuts
- Soybeans
- Sesame

To protect those with food allergies and other food hypersensitivities, the FDA enforces regulations requiring companies to list ingredients on packaged foods and beverages. For certain foods or substances that cause allergies or other hypersensitivity reactions, there are more specific labeling requirements.

Click or scan to access the  
FDA Food Allergy Resources



With the passage of Public Health Act 23-115 (approved June 2023), food service establishments in Connecticut have new regulations regarding allergens.

Click or scan to access the public act



Substitute House Bill No. 6902  
Public Act No. 23-115

**AN ACT CONCERNING FOOD ALLERGY AWARENESS IN RESTAURANTS**

Enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened.

Section 1. (NEW) (Effective July 1, 2023) Not later than January 1, 2025, each class 2, class 3 and class 4 food establishment, as defined in section 19a-36g of the general statutes, shall post in a clear and conspicuous manner on its menus and menu boards a request for customers to notify their server, prior to placing an order, of any food allergies.

Sec. 2. (NEW) (Effective from passage) (a) Not later than December 1, 2025, the Department of Public Health shall develop or approve an informational poster regarding food allergies for display in class 2, class 3 and class 4 food establishments, as defined in section 19a-36g of the general statutes. The poster shall contain information concerning: (1) the most common allergy-causing foods; (2) the actions a server should take when a customer notifies the server that the customer has a food allergy; (3) the ways in which kitchen staff and servers can prevent cross contact of foods; and (4) the need to contact the 911 emergency telecommunications number if a customer has an allergic reaction while on the premises of such food establishment.



**Mandatory DPH Allergen Poster and Training**

As of March 1, 2024

- 1) Each Class 2, 3, and 4 food establishment is required to display the mandatory DPH allergen awareness poster in a clear and conspicuous manner in its kitchen or designated staff area.

Click or scan to access the poster



**NOTE: Failure to display poster shall be grounds for an inspection violation under section 19a-36l of the general statutes.**

- 2) Certified food protection manager shall:
  - a. ensure that each employee of the food establishment has viewed the poster.
  - b. require each employee to confirm in writing that the employee has familiarized themselves with the information displayed in the poster.

Click or scan to access the sample training record

Name of Establishment: \_\_\_\_\_ Address of Establishment: \_\_\_\_\_

**Food Allergen Awareness Training Record**

Pursuant to Connecticut General Statute Section 19a-36l, The Certified Food Protection manager shall ensure that each employee of the food establishment has been trained and has viewed the Food Allergen Awareness poster. It is required that each employee confirm, in writing, that they understood the information displayed on the poster.

Training shall include but not necessarily be limited to:

- Identifying cross contact (cross contamination)
- Allergy symptoms to look for in a customer
- Be knowledgeable of menu items and specific ingredients
- Preventing cross contact (contamination)
- Effective communication with customers
- Report allergen information to manager or person in charge and food preparation staff
- When to contact 911

The Certified Food Protection Manager (CFPM) is responsible for completing the Food Allergen Awareness Training and maintaining employee training records:

Employee Name	Employee Title	Employee Signature	Date of Training	CFPM Name	CFPM Signature



### *Menu Food Allergy Notice*

As of January 1, 2025

- 1) Each class 2, 3, and 4 food establishment is required to post in a clear and conspicuous manner on its menus and menu boards a request for customers to notify their server, prior to placing an order, of any food allergies.

Click or scan to view the code

**FOOD ALLERGY  
NOTICE**  
**PLEASE ALERT YOUR  
SERVER IF YOU HAVE  
ANY ALLERGIES!**



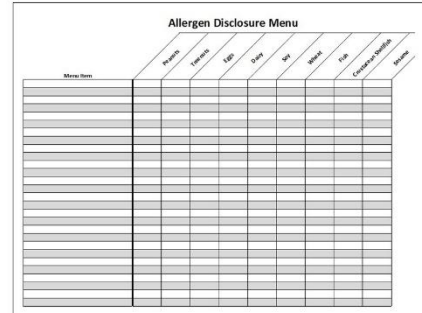


### Allergen Menu

The [2022 FDA Food Code](#), indicates that permit holders SHALL *notify CONSUMERS by written notification of the presence of MAJOR FOOD ALLERGENS as an ingredient in unPACKAGED FOOD items that are served or sold to the CONSUMER.*

*(See 3-602.12 Other Forms of Information)*

Click or scan for editable Allergen Menu Template



The image shows a template for an Allergen Disclosure Menu. It is a table with 10 columns and 15 rows. The columns are labeled as follows: Menu Item, Wheat, Tree Nuts, Eggs, Dairy, Soy, Sesame, Fish, Crustacean Shellfish, and Other. The table is currently empty, with only the headers filled in.

Menu Item	Wheat	Tree Nuts	Eggs	Dairy	Soy	Sesame	Fish	Crustacean Shellfish	Other





**Some things our inspector may ask you related to**  
**ALLERGENS**

- If a customer asks about a specific allergen in an unpackaged food, how do you handle that?
- Do you have policies or procedures in place for handling an order from a customer with a food allergy?
- Do you have an allergen menu?
- Do you have a Food Allergy notice on your menu?
- Is the mandatory allergen poster displayed somewhere that employees can see it?
- How are staff trained about food allergies? How is the training recorded?

## 5.b: CLEANING AND SANITIZING (Updated 2024)

### Why does this matter?

When food contact surfaces are not properly cleaned, sanitized and dried they can allow illness-causing germs to grow and multiply and can also contribute to pest problems.

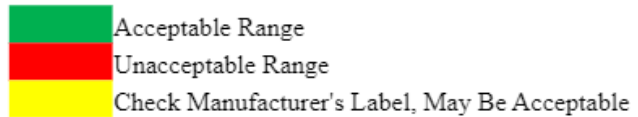
The chart below provides general guidance about food contact surface sanitizer concentration ranges. Approved sanitizers must have manufacturer instructions for sanitizing food contact surfaces. Establishments must follow those manufacturer instructions.

Sanitizer Type		Range					
		0	100	150	200	400	500
Quaternary Ammonium (Quat)	ppm	0	100	150	200	400	500
Chlorine (Bleach)	ppm	0	10	50	100	200	>200
Lactic Acid (Sink & Surface Cleaner Sanitizer)	ppm	0	452	704	1875	2258	3010

### Examples of Sink and Surface Cleaners/Sanitizers



EPA Registered - EPA Reg. No. 70271-13



Use test strips to ensure that sanitizer concentrations are in the proper range to kill germs and not leave a toxic residue on food contact surfaces.





**Some things our inspector may ask you related to**  
**CLEANING AND SANITIZING**

- Can you demonstrate how the 3-compartment sink is set up when equipment and utensils are soiled and need to be cleaned?
- What type of sanitizer are you using?
- How frequently do you change your sanitizer bucket?
- How do you know that the sanitizer concentration is correct?
- Is there a specific water temperature at which your sanitizer needs to be prepared?
- What procedures do you have in place to ensure that the dish machine is operating properly?
- Do you have a dish temp plate, min/max thermometer or temperature stickers for your high temp dish machine?
- Describe the method you use to clean the meat slicer?
- Who is responsible for cleaning the food preparation sink? What procedure is used?
- How does an employee know that the food preparation sink was previously cleaned and sanitized before they use it to prepare food?
- Do you have a cleaning schedule for food equipment that cannot be sent thorough the dish machine or cleaned in the three-compartment sink?
- How often do you clean and sanitize your food contact surfaces?

## 5.c: PROTECTION FROM CONTAMINATION (Updated 2024)

### Why does this matter?

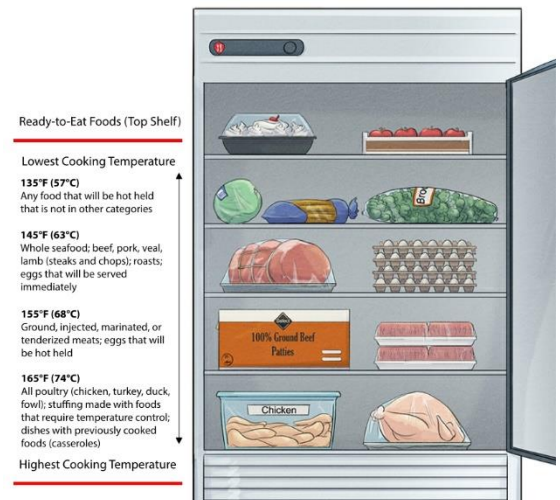
Cross contamination of foods can lead to foodborne illnesses. By keeping different types of food separate, you ensure that harmful germs do not mix, protecting customer health and maintaining food safety standards.

- Always store Ready-To-Eat (RTE) foods on the top shelf.
- Arrange other shelves by cooking temperature (highest cooking temperature on the bottom).

Click or scan  
to download the flyer

### Refrigerator Storage Chart

Always store ready-to-eat foods on the top shelf! Arrange other shelves by cooking temperature (highest cooking temperature on the bottom).



Graphic by  
StateFoodSafety at  
<https://www.statefoodsafety.com/Resources/Posters/fridge-storage-for-food-safety>





**Some things our inspector may ask you related to**  
**CONTAMINATION**

- Describe your system for storing raw animal foods in the walk-in cooler?
- Where are ready-to-eat foods that require refrigeration stored before service?
- How do food employees know which food products go on what shelves in the walk-in cooler?
- What steps do you use to prevent cross-contamination in the food preparation area?
- How do you verify that foods are being stored, prepared, held, and displayed to prevent cross-contamination? How often is this verification done? Who is responsible for overseeing this?