



Shire of Denmark

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Thermometers and their use in Food Premises

As part of the new Food Safety Standards and to ensure good food safe practice it is necessary to provide a suitable thermometer to ensure the safe processing and storage of potentially hazardous food.

Why do I need a thermometer?

The thermometer allows the measuring of food temperature when food is stored in a refrigerator or displayed in chilled or heated cabinets. It is important to store potentially hazardous food either below 5 degrees or above 60 degrees Celsius (C). The temperature between 5 and 60 degrees C is the danger zone. If food is stored in the danger zone food poisoning bacteria can multiply. Thermometers can also be used for measuring temperature of food when delivered to food premises to ensure all products are delivered at a safe temperature.

What sort of thermometer do I need?

It needs to be a stem thermometer that can be inserted into food and have an accuracy of plus or minus 1 degree C.

I already have a thermometer will it meet requirements?

If it is a probe thermometer and can be shown to have a plus or minus 1 degree of accuracy, or the accuracy can be supported by papers that came with the thermometer or information from the supplying agent, the thermometer is adequate.

Equipment used on the premises may have a built-in thermometer, which records the operational temperature of the equipment. Such thermometers do not measure the temperature of food and therefore a probe thermometer is still required.

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How do I calibrate a thermometer?

Thermometers need to be regularly calibrated to ensure the accuracy of the instrument. A thermometer can be calibrated by placing the probe into a container that has ice and melted water. The thermometer is to be left in the water for two minutes and the displayed temperature should read 0 degrees C. If the recorded temperature is outside this reading the thermometer should be calibrated, serviced or replaced.

If the thermometer has an analogue dial the reading can be adjusted by turning a nut under the dial to ensure the hand points to 0 degrees C. Many digital thermometers do not have adjustment, and if the reading is below or above 0 degrees C, this amount should be subtracted or added when measuring temperatures.

How do I use the thermometer?

Use the following steps:

- Thermometer to be clean and dry.
- Wait for the temperature on the thermometer display to stabilise.
- Measure different parts of the food, external as well as internal.
- Measure foods in different areas of a refrigerated display case as the temperature can vary in different locations within the case.
- Sanitise the probe between measuring temperatures of different foods, as described below.
- Measure the temperature of packed chilled packages by placing the length of the thermometer between the packages.

How do I clean and sanitise the thermometer?

It is important that the thermometer is cleaned and sanitised between measuring the temperature of different foods, particularly raw meats and cooked foods.

The thermometer can be cleaned and sanitised by:

- Washing the probe with hot water and detergent.
- Sanitising the probe with a sanitiser or with alcoholic swabs.
- If necessary rinse the sanitiser away with tap water.
- Air dry the probe or use clean paper towel.

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Where can I buy a thermometer and how much does it cost?

Thermometers can be purchased from \$15, but digital thermometers usually cost between \$20 and \$50.

Thermometers can also be purchased from companies selling electronic testing equipment or from catering suppliers. Check Yellow Pages in the telephone directory.

Alcoholic swabs are available from local pharmacies.

Ref ANZFA Fact Sheet Thermometers and using them with potentially hazardous food.

<http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/newsroom/factsheets/foodsafetyfactsheets/thermometersandusing105.cfm>