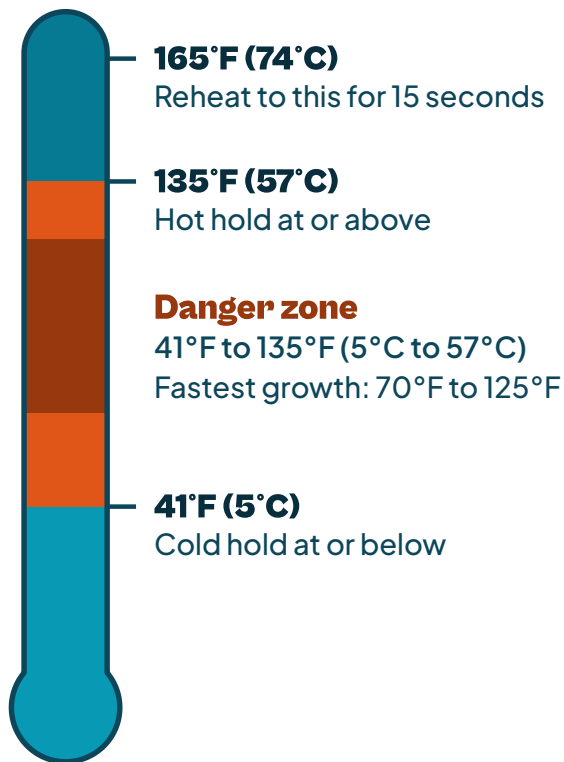


Safe temperatures for TCS food

Holding, cooling, reheating and time limits from the 2026 FDA Food Code

01 The danger zone



02 Cool in two stages

1 **135°F to 70°F**
within 2 hours

2 **70°F to 41°F**
within the next 4 hours

! **Missed 70°F at 2 hours?**
Reheat to 165°F and restart, or discard

03 Time without temp control

4 hrs

Hot or cold food,
then serve or discard

6 hrs

Cold only: starts at 41°F,
never goes above 70°F

Mark every container with its discard time.

Measure the food, not the air. Check holding temps every 2 hours.

04 Date marking

Ready-to-eat TCS food held over 24 hours:

- Label it with a discard date
- 7 days max at 41°F or below
- Day of prep counts as day 1

05 Common mistakes

✗ Reheating on a
steam table

✗ Cooling in a deep,
covered pot

✗ Re-chilling food to
reset the clock

✗ Trusting the cooler
air display