

Food Safety SOP (FDA Food Code)

SOP · US · Updated 2026-07-13 · Square brackets are placeholders to replace with your own details.

A food safety SOP is the written procedure that carries food safely through every stage of your operation — receiving, storage, preparation, cooking, and service — with the hygiene and allergen rules that apply at each stage. It is the document that turns "everyone knows to keep chicken cold" into a routine a new hire can follow on day one and an inspector can verify in an afternoon.

Most foodborne illness traces back to a handful of failures: food held at the wrong temperature, hands not washed at the right moment, raw food contaminating ready-to-eat food, and allergens reaching the one guest who cannot tolerate them. None of them announces itself during a busy service — which is why each needs a written rule, not a shared assumption.

This template gives you the full sequence: receiving, storage, preparation and cooking controls, the handwashing routine, Big 9 allergen awareness, and the daily habits that make a health inspection a formality instead of an event.

Purpose and scope

This SOP sets out how [Your company] keeps food safe at [location], from the receiving door to the pass. It applies to everyone who receives, stores, prepares, cooks, or serves food; the [person in charge] on each shift owns compliance and verifies the day's logs.

Menu-specific figures — cooking temperatures, cooling steps, the allergen matrix — live at [location/system] and are part of this SOP.

Receiving

1. Check every delivery on arrival, before signing: intact packaging, clean vehicle, in-date stock, no pest signs — reject and record anything that fails.
2. Probe refrigerated deliveries and refuse cold food warmer than 41°F per the FDA Food Code; record the reading on the receiving log.
3. Check frozen goods are frozen solid with no evidence of thawing and refreezing (ice crystals, misshapen packaging).
4. Check allergen-relevant items against the order — a substituted brand can carry a different allergen profile; flag substitutions to [name/role] before they enter stock.
5. Move cold and frozen goods to storage immediately; the receiving log time and the put-away time should be minutes apart.
6. Record supplier, item, reading, time, initials, and accepted/rejected for each delivery on the receiving log.

Storage

- 1.

Store food in the vertical order that protects it: ready-to-eat food on top shelves, then whole cuts, then ground meats, with raw poultry always on the bottom — drips travel down.

2. Label and date everything that is opened, portioned, or prepped, and work first-in, first-out; undated food is discarded, not guessed at.
3. Keep all food off the floor, in covered containers, and away from chemicals — cleaning products live in the designated chemical area, never above or beside food.
4. Check and record cooler and freezer temperatures at open, [mid-shift], and close on the temperature log — cold holding at 41°F or below per the FDA Food Code; flag any unit out of range to the [person in charge] and treat its food as suspect until cleared.
5. Store identified allergen ingredients ([sesame, nut products, etc.]) in dedicated, labeled containers at [location] to limit cross-contact in storage.

Preparation and cooking

1. Wash hands before starting prep and at every change of task — the full routine in the handwashing section below.
2. Use separate, color-coded cutting boards and utensils for raw proteins and ready-to-eat foods, and clean and sanitize surfaces between tasks.
3. Prep in small batches so food spends minutes, not hours, in the danger zone between cold and hot holding.
4. Cook each item to the internal temperature the FDA Food Code or your local code specifies for that food, probing the thickest part; the required figures for our menu are posted at [location].
5. Hold hot food at 135°F or above and reheat previously cooked food to 165°F before hot holding, per the FDA Food Code — holding equipment keeps food hot, it does not make food hot.
6. Cool hot food destined for the cooler using your local code's cooling steps [method and checkpoints], and record it.
7. Sanitize the probe thermometer between foods, every time, and calibrate it [frequency] by [ice-point/manufacturer method].

Handwashing and personal hygiene

1. Wash hands at a hand sink — never a prep or dish sink — with soap and warm water, scrubbing for the time it takes to work lather over hands, wrists, and under nails, then rinse and dry with paper towel.
2. Wash before starting work, after the restroom, after handling raw food, after touching the face or phone, after handling trash or chemicals, after clearing tables, and at every glove change.
3. Keep every hand sink stocked (soap, paper towels, warm water) and unblocked — an unusable hand sink is one of the most common inspection findings.
4. Use gloves or utensils for ready-to-eat food per your local code, and change gloves whenever you would wash hands — gloves pick up contamination exactly as hands do.
- 5.

Report illness before the shift: anyone with vomiting, diarrhea, jaundice, or an infected wound reports to the [person in charge], who applies the exclusion rules in your local code — sick food workers are how outbreaks start.

6. Keep fingernails short and unpolished, cover cuts with a waterproof dressing and glove, and keep drinks in closed containers away from prep surfaces.

Allergen awareness — the Big 9

Federal law recognizes nine major food allergens: milk, eggs, fish, crustacean shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, soybeans, and sesame. [Your company] maintains an allergen matrix at [location] listing which menu items contain or may contain each of the nine — updated whenever a recipe, brand, or supplier changes.

- When a guest declares an allergy, the server tells the [person in charge], who owns the order end to end — no guessing at the table, ever.
- Allergen orders are prepared with clean hands, fresh gloves, cleaned and sanitized surfaces and utensils, and ingredients from unopened or dedicated stock where the matrix requires it.
- Fryer oil, shared grills, and garnish stations are the classic cross-contact points — the matrix flags which items cannot be made safely for which allergens, and "we cannot make that safely" is always an acceptable answer.
- The allergen-order plate is marked [flag/marker] and delivered by [the person in charge/the server who took the order], announcing the allergen it was prepared for.

Health inspection readiness

- Run every day as if the inspector arrives at the worst moment — because they can, unannounced, during service.
- Keep the paper trail current and reachable in minutes: temperature logs, receiving logs, waste log, cleaning schedule sign-offs, food handler certificates, and the allergen matrix.
- Walk the inspector's route [frequency]: hand sinks stocked, sanitizer buckets at label concentration with test strips nearby, food labeled and dated, nothing on the floor, raw-over-ready never inverted.
- Treat every inspection finding as a fix to this SOP, not just to the kitchen — if the routine allowed the finding, the routine changes.

Records and review

Completed logs, sign-offs, and training records are filed at [system/location] for [period]. They answer the inspector's "how do you monitor this?", the insurer's questions after a claim, and any illness complaint investigation.

This SOP is reviewed [frequency, e.g. annually], after any inspection finding, suspected illness, or allergen incident, and whenever the menu or equipment changes. Owner: [name/role]. Next review due: [date].

How to use this template

1. Fill in your real menu figures first: cooking temperatures per item from the FDA Food Code or your local code, posted at the line, and your local cooling steps.
2. Build the allergen matrix before you adopt the SOP — walk every recipe against the Big 9, including oils, garnishes, and "may contain" ingredients, and date it.
3. Check your state and local food code for anything stricter than the FDA Food Code baseline — holding figures, glove rules, training requirements — and adjust.
4. Train every food handler against this SOP with a sign-off per section, and repeat the allergen section whenever the matrix changes.
5. Audit weekly for a month after adoption: probe a cooler yourself, watch a handwash, and ask a server what happens when a guest declares an allergy.

Official guidance

- › [FDA — Food Code](#)
- › [FDA — Retail food protection](#)
- › [FDA — Food allergies](#)

This template is provided in good faith and for general information — it is not legal advice. Adapt it to your organisation and, where your sector carries specific legal requirements, have the finished document reviewed by a qualified adviser. The live version at <https://trainedteam.com/templates/food-safety-sop-us> is kept current; this file is a snapshot.