

Inspection Report Item 24: Time as a Food Safety Control

FDA Food Code References: 3-501.19

*adapted from Cerro Gordo Food Safety Manual



Time as a Food Safety Control

Time is usually used in combination with temperature to control bacterial growth in potentially hazardous foods and ensure safe food products. However, under certain circumstances you may rely on "time only" as the food safety control. Used correctly, time can be an effective control because there will be no significant bacterial growth or resulting toxin production possible in such a limited time. Time must be closely monitored and controlled, or foodborne illness may result.

Situations in which foods may be used with "time only" as a Food Safety Control

- A working supply of temperature control for safety food held before cooking.
- Ready-to-eat, temperature control for safety, food that is displayed or held for service for immediate consumption.

Conditions that must be met when using time as a Food Safety Control

- The food container or package must be clearly marked to indicate the exact time that is four hours past the point in time when the food is removed from temperature control.
- The food must be cooked and served, served if ready-to-eat, or discarded, within four hours from the point in time when the food is removed from temperature control.

Note that once time is used as the control, food cannot be placed under temperature control again to be saved and used at a later time.

- All food in unmarked containers or packages, or for which the time limit has expired, must be discarded.
- To ensure that employees know how to properly use time as a control:
 - Provide proper training on procedures and requirements of time as a control for food safety.

The Establishment must have written procedures prepared in advance, maintained in the food establishment and made available to the regulatory authority upon request that specify:

- What food time limits will apply to
- How food will be marked with time limits,
- Procedures for employees to follow when preparing, cooking and serving foods, or serving ready-to-eat foods, and discarding food that is unmarked or for which the time has expired.