

ServSafe Food Handler Cheat Sheet 2026

The night-before summary, built like the exam.

40 Questions	— Time limit	75% Passing score
— Exam fee	National Restaurant Ass... Governing body	

Exam at a Glance

- 40 questions, non-proctored
- 75% to pass — that is 30 of 40 correct, so you can miss up to 10 questions
- Certificate of Achievement recognized for 3 years

The Temperature Danger Zone

- Pathogens grow most rapidly between 41°F and 135°F
- 4-hour rule: TCS food must not stay in the danger zone more than 4 hours total — food held longer must be discarded

Holding Temperatures

- Hot TCS food: 135°F or higher
- Cold TCS food: 41°F or lower
- Memory hook: the holding limits are exactly the danger-zone boundaries — correct holding keeps food out of the zone on either side

Minimum Cooking Temperatures

- Poultry and stuffed items: 165°F for 1 second
- Ground meat: 155°F for 17 seconds

Two-Stage Cooling — the 2–4–6 Rule

1. 135°F -> 70°F within 2 hours
2. 70°F -> 41°F within 4 more hours

Total cooling time: 6 hours maximum.

Personal Hygiene and Illness

- Wash hands at a designated handwashing sink for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm running water
- Do not work with food if you have vomiting, diarrhea, or jaundice, or a diagnosis of Salmonella, Shigella, E. coli, Hepatitis A, or Norovirus

Cross-Contamination Prevention

- Separate raw and ready-to-eat foods
- Use separate equipment
- Clean and sanitize surfaces

The Major Food Allergens

Milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, soy, and sesame.

Responsible Alcohol Service Quick Facts

- Acceptable ID: a valid, unexpired, government-issued photo ID — driver's license, state ID card, passport, or military ID
- Signs of intoxication: slurred speech, impaired balance, glassy or bloodshot eyes, and lowered inhibitions or aggressive behavior
- Dram shop liability: an establishment can be held liable for injuries caused by a patron served while visibly intoxicated or a minor
- Food and water can be offered, but only time reduces a person's blood alcohol concentration

Official sources

- U.S. Food and Drug Administration — FDA Food Code 2022: <https://www.fda.gov/media/164194/download?attachment>
- ServSafe (National Restaurant Association) — ServSafe Manager Certification Overview: <https://www.servsafe.com/ServSafe-Manager>
- National Restaurant Association — ServSafe Food Handler Program Overview: <https://www.servsafe.com/ss/foodhandler/FHOverview.aspx>

Free practice questions for this exam: www.everyexamprep.com/exams/servsafe-food-handler/practice-test