THERMOMETER CALIBRATION | FOOD CODE FACT SHEET #1

Use a calibrated thermometer to check food temperatures safely and accurately. Calibration helps protect food safety during receiving, preparation, storage, and distribution.

Target temperature for ice point calibration: 32°F (0°C)

- Thermometers should be calibrated whenever they are dropped, before first use, and weekly if not checked for reasons above.
- Temperature is a critical measurement of ensuring the safety and quality of many food products. Whether monitoring temperatures at receiving, throughout production, or final product storage and distribution, thermometer calibration is essential.
- Sanitize thermometers before and in between uses.
- The simple and quick way to sanitize is with an alcohol swab. Otherwise, sanitize the same as other kitchen utensils.

ICE POINT METHOD

Follow these steps to calibrate a food thermometer with ice water.

1. Fill an insulated cup with crushed ice and water.
2. Pack in enough crushed ice to create a 32°F (0°C) environment. Add more ice during the process as needed.
3. Let the ice-water mixture stabilize for about 4 to 5 minutes.
4. Insert the thermometer to the proper immersion depth.
5. Keep the stem at least 1 inch from the bottom and sides of the cup to avoid an incorrect reading.
6. If the thermometer is not accurate within plus or minus 2°F, adjust it while the stem stays in the ice water. Hold the adjusting nut under the thermometer head with a suitable tool and turn the dial head until the pointer reads 32°F.

Accuracy note: The ice point method permits calibration to within 0.1°F when done correctly.

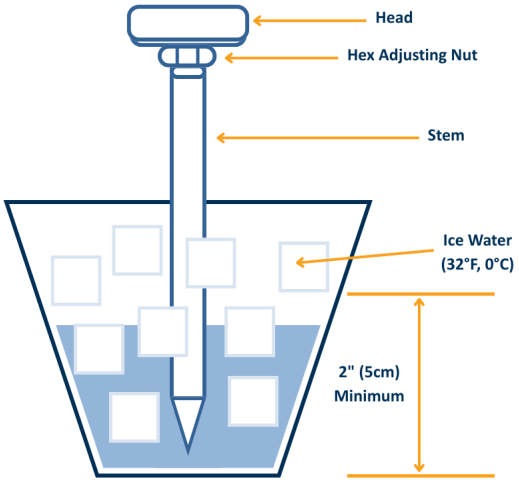

Illustration: Keep the thermometer stem in the ice water, away from the cup's sides and bottom.