



A Tradition of Stewardship
A Commitment to Service

Planning, Building & Environmental Services

1195 Third Street, Suite 210
Napa, CA 94559
www.countyofnapa.org

Cheese Storage Guidelines

The California Retail Food Code (CalCode) requires all potentially hazardous foods (PHFs) to be stored at or above 135°F or at or below 41°F. However, milk products in original sealed containers may be held at or below 45°F. This means cheese in original packaging must be stored at or below 45°F, and all other cheese must be stored at or below 41°F. During an inspection, PHFs documented at temperatures between 42°F and 49°F or 131°F and 134°F constitute minor violations and PHFs documented at temperatures between 50°F and 130°F constitute major violations. A major violation presents an imminent health hazard and must be corrected during the inspection.

Cheese that is *proven* to have a pH of 4.6 or below or a water activity of 0.85 or below is not, by definition, potentially hazardous. However, it is your responsibility to submit documentation to this office, demonstrating that cheese stored out of temperature control at your facility is not potentially hazardous. Cheeses that are not proven to meet the above criteria must be kept refrigerated or violations will be documented at the facility.

To legally bring cheese to room temperature directly before serving, you must submit a time and temperature to this office for approval that complies with CalCode, Section 114000. For ready-to-eat potentially hazardous food that is held for service for immediate consumption, the facility must submit a proposal for approval to the Department. The plan must include the following:

1. Food shall be marked or otherwise identified to indicate the time that is four hours past the point in time when the food is removed from temperature control.
2. Food shall be cooked and served, served if ready-to-eat, or discarded within a four hours from the point in time when the food is removed from temperature control.
3. Food in unmarked containers or packages or marked to exceed a four-hour limit shall be discarded.
4. The written procedures shall be maintained in the food facility and made available to the enforcement agency upon request that ensure compliance with CalCode (including cooling, if applicable).