

STUDENT COURSEBOOK

2026 FDA Food Code

Chapter 1: Purpose, Definitions & Introduction

An Introduction to the Food Code with Summaries of Chapters 2–8

Training note: The FDA Food Code is a model code offered for adoption by regulatory jurisdictions. Always follow the requirements adopted by the applicable regulatory authority.

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Welcome to the 2026 FDA Food Code

Chapter 1 provides the foundation for understanding the rest of the FDA Food Code. It explains what the Code is intended to accomplish, what it covers, and the defined terms used throughout the document.

Purpose of the Food Code: safeguard public health and provide consumers food that is safe, unadulterated, and honestly presented.

Learning Objectives

- Explain the purpose and scope of the FDA Food Code.
- Recognize important defined terms used throughout food-safety training.
- Understand how Chapters 2 through 8 work together as one food-safety system.
- Identify the major responsibilities of management, employees, and the regulatory authority.
- Recognize the major controls used to prevent contamination, pathogen growth, chemical hazards, and unsafe operations.
- Prepare for later chapter study by connecting key rules to their chapter.

1. What Is the FDA Food Code?

The FDA Food Code is a model of uniform provisions for retail and foodservice safety. It gives regulatory jurisdictions a scientifically based framework for protecting consumers and reducing foodborne illness and injury.

The Code establishes definitions and standards for management and personnel, food operations, equipment, water and plumbing, physical facilities, poisonous or toxic materials, plan review, permits, inspections, employee restrictions, and enforcement.

The Food Code Is a Model Code

- FDA publishes the Food Code as its best advice for a uniform retail food-safety system.
- State, local, tribal, territorial, and federal jurisdictions may adopt the Food Code into their own laws or regulations.
- Because adoption varies, the applicable regulatory authority determines the enforceable requirements in a particular jurisdiction.
- The 2026 Food Code is the current FDA edition.

2. Important Chapter 1 Definitions

Chapter 1 contains the definitions that give specific meaning to terms used throughout the Code. Understanding these terms helps students interpret later requirements correctly.

Term	Student-friendly meaning
Food	A raw, cooked, or processed edible substance, ice, beverage, ingredient, or chewing gum intended for human consumption.
Food Employee	A person working with unpackaged food, food equipment or utensils, or food-contact surfaces.
Food Establishment	An operation that stores, prepares, packages, serves, vends, or otherwise provides food for human consumption as described by the Code.
Food-Contact Surface	A surface food normally touches, or a surface from which food may drain, drip, or splash into food or onto another food-contact surface.
TCS Food	Food that requires time/temperature control for safety to limit pathogenic microorganism growth or toxin formation.
Ready-to-Eat Food	Food in a form that is edible without additional preparation needed for food safety, subject to the Code's definition and exceptions.
Person in Charge (PIC)	The individual present at the food establishment who is responsible for the operation at that time.
Exclude	Prevent a person from working as an employee in, or entering as an employee, a food establishment.
Restrict	Limit the activities of a food employee so there is no risk of transmitting disease through food.
Food Defense	Protecting food from intentional adulteration or tampering.
Food Safety Management System	A preventive system of policies, procedures, and practices used to control foodborne-illness risk factors.
Priority Item	A provision whose application contributes directly to eliminating, preventing, or reducing hazards associated with foodborne illness or injury.
Priority Foundation Item	A provision that supports, facilitates, or enables one or more Priority Items.
Core Item	A provision generally related to sanitation, operational controls, equipment design, or general maintenance.

3. How Chapters 2–8 Work Together

Chapter	Main Focus
2	Management and Personnel
3	Food
4	Equipment, Utensils, and Linens
5	Water, Plumbing, and Waste
6	Physical Facilities
7	Poisonous or Toxic Materials
8	Compliance and Enforcement

A safe food establishment depends on all of these areas working together. Good food temperatures cannot compensate for unsafe employee practices; clean equipment cannot compensate for contaminated water; and strong policies are ineffective if they are not implemented and verified.

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Chapter 2 Summary: Management and Personnel



Chapter 2: employee health, handwashing, hygiene, training, and management responsibilities.

Chapter 2 focuses on the people who manage and handle food. It establishes responsibilities for the Person in Charge, employee health, personal cleanliness, hygienic practices, and management systems that prevent foodborne illness.

- The Person in Charge must ensure compliance and maintain active managerial control.
- Employees must report specified symptoms, diagnoses, and exposure information as required by the Code.
- All employees may need to be excluded or restricted depending on symptoms, diagnosis, population served, and other factors.
- Food employees must wash their hands and exposed portions of their arms at required times and in the proper manner.
- Employees must follow personal-cleanliness and hygienic-practice rules, including controls for jewelry, hair restraints, eating, drinking, and tobacco use.
- The 2026 Code includes a written employee illness policy requirement and written procedures for responding to vomiting and diarrheal events.
- Food defense is included in management knowledge and employee training responsibilities.

Chapter 2 asks: Are the people working in the establishment managing food-safety risks correctly?

Chapter 3 Summary: Food



Chapter 3: approved food, contamination prevention, temperature control, cooking, cooling, holding, and storage.

Chapter 3 follows food through the operation—from approved source and receiving through storage, preparation, cooking, cooling, holding, service, and disposition.

- Food must come from approved, lawful sources and be safe, unadulterated, and honestly presented.
- Prevent cross-contamination between raw animal foods, ready-to-eat foods, equipment, and other sources.
- Control bare-hand contact with exposed ready-to-eat food as required by the Code.
- Use required cooking temperatures for different foods and processes.
- Cool cooked TCS food from 135°F to 70°F within 2 hours and to 41°F or less within 6 hours total.
- Hold TCS food generally at 135°F or above for hot holding or 41°F or below for cold holding.
- Applicable refrigerated ready-to-eat TCS food held more than 24 hours is generally date marked for a maximum of 7 days at 41°F or less, with Day 1 as the preparation/opening day.
- Follow rules for reheating, thawing, time as a public health control, parasite destruction, allergens, consumer advisories, and highly susceptible populations.

Chapter 3 asks: Is the food protected from contamination and controlled through safe time and temperature practices?

Chapter 4 Summary: Equipment, Utensils, and Linens



Chapter 4: equipment and utensil cleaning, warewashing, sanitizing, and proper maintenance.

- Food-contact materials must be safe, durable, corrosion-resistant, smooth, and easily cleanable.
- Equipment and utensils must be properly designed, installed, maintained, and operated.
- Manual warewashing generally follows: scrape, wash, rinse, sanitize, and air-dry.
- Manual wash solution is generally at least 110°F or the cleaning-agent label temperature.
- Manual hot-water sanitizing uses water at 171°F or above for at least 30 seconds.
- Chemical sanitizer concentration must be checked with an appropriate test kit or device.
- Food-contact surfaces used with TCS food are generally cleaned at least every 4 hours unless an exception applies.
- Cleaned and sanitized equipment and utensils must air-dry or adequately drained.
- The 2026 Code includes specific disinfection provisions for certain bodily-fluid contamination and outbreak situations.

Chapter 5 Summary: Water, Plumbing, and Waste



Chapter 5: safe water, plumbing, backflow prevention, sewage, refuse, and handwashing facilities.

Chapter 5 controls the water and waste systems that support safe food operations.

- Water must come from an approved source and be safe for its intended use.
- Hot and cold-water capacity must be sufficient to meet peak demands.
- Plumbing systems and fixtures must be properly installed and maintained.
- Cross-connections and backflow can contaminate the drinking-water system and must be prevented.
- Handwashing sinks must be provided in the required number and locations and must be accessible for employee use.
- A service sink or approved curbed cleaning facility is required for cleaning mops and disposing of mop water.
- Sewage must be conveyed and disposed of through an approved system.
- Refuse, recyclables, and returnables must be handled and stored to prevent contamination, odors, pests, and other public-health problems.

Chapter 5 asks: Are water, plumbing, sewage, and waste systems protecting rather than contaminating the operation?

Chapter 6 Summary: Physical Facilities



Chapter 6: cleanable facilities, lighting, ventilation, maintenance, and pest prevention.

- Floors, walls, and ceilings must be designed and maintained so they can be effectively cleaned.
- Moisture-prone areas require appropriate nonabsorbent surfaces.
- Outer openings must be protected against entry of insects, rodents, and other pests.
- Employee handwashing areas must have required soap, drying provisions, and signage.
- Lighting requirements vary by area and task, including 10, 20, and 50 foot-candle standards.
- Ventilation must control excessive heat, steam, condensation, vapors, odors, smoke, and fumes when necessary.
- Physical facilities must be cleaned and maintained in good repair.
- Pest entry and harborage must be prevented and controlled.
- Live animals are generally prohibited except for specified Code exceptions, including qualifying service animals and approved pet dogs in outdoor dining areas.

Chapter 7 Summary: Poisonous or Toxic Materials



Chapter 7: safe chemical labeling, storage, use, pesticides, medicines, and contamination prevention.

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- Original chemical containers must retain a legible manufacturer's label.
- Working containers must be clearly identified with the common name of the material.
- Chemicals must be stored to prevent contamination and may not be stored above food or protected food-contact items.
- Only necessary poisonous or toxic materials are generally allowed, except packaged retail products.
- Chemicals, sanitizers, disinfectants, and pesticides must be used according to applicable law and label directions.
- Containers that previously held poisonous or toxic materials may never be reused for food or foodservice items.
- Restricted-use pesticides require appropriate certified control.
- Employee medicines and first-aid supplies must be labeled and stored to prevent contamination.

Chapter 8 Summary: Compliance and Enforcement



Chapter 8: permits, plan review, inspections, violation categories, corrective actions, and documentation.

- Chapter 8 explains how the regulatory authority applies and enforces the Food Code.
- Plans may be required before new construction, conversion, or major remodeling.
- HACCP plans are required for specified processes, variances, and certain reduced-oxygen packaging operations.
- The 2026 Code adds a written Food Safety Management System requirement, generally within four years after jurisdictional adoption, subject to the Code's minimal-risk provision.
- A valid permit is generally required before operating a food establishment.
- The model Code generally calls for routine inspection at least once every six months, subject to exceptions and risk-based scheduling.
- Inspection reports document violations and corrective actions.
- Priority violations are corrected immediately when possible; when additional time is allowed, the model Code limits it to 72 hours. Priority Foundation items may be allowed up to 10 calendar days, and Core items generally up to 90 calendar days.
- Imminent health hazards may require immediate discontinuation of affected operations and notification of the regulatory authority.

Putting It All Together: The Food-Safety System

Risk or Control	Where the Code Addresses It
Employee illness and hygiene	Chapter 2
Food source, contamination, cooking, cooling, holding	Chapter 3
Equipment cleaning and sanitizing	Chapter 4
Water, plumbing, sewage, and refuse	Chapter 5
Facility construction, cleaning, pests, and animals	Chapter 6
Chemicals, pesticides, medicines, and toxic materials	Chapter 7
Plans, permits, inspections, corrections, enforcement	Chapter 8

A Manager's Big-Picture Approach

- Start with people: train employees and control employee-health risks.
- Protect food from the moment it is received until it is served.
- Keep equipment and utensils clean, sanitized, maintained, and appropriate for use.
- Protect the water supply and properly manage sewage and waste.
- Maintain a clean, pest-resistant physical facility.
- Control chemicals and toxic materials.
- Verify the system through active managerial control, records, inspections, and corrective action.

Food safety is a system. A breakdown in one chapter can create a hazard even when the other parts of the operation are working correctly.

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2026 Food Code Highlights Students Should Recognize

- New Chapter 1 definitions include Food Defense, Food Safety Management System, and Mobile Food Establishment.
- Chapter 2 expands food-defense responsibilities and includes written employee illness-policy requirements.
- Chapter 3 includes a new approved double-gloving exception under specified conditions and an alternative cooling process.
- Chapter 4 adds specific disinfection provisions and related testing requirements.
- Chapter 6 has no substantive 2026 changes identified in FDA's official summary.
- Chapter 7 explicitly adds disinfectants to the working-container labeling language.
- Chapter 8 adds the written Food Safety Management System requirement.

End-of-Chapter Multiple-Choice Review

1. The primary purpose of the FDA Food Code is to:

- A. Set menu prices
- B. Safeguard public health and provide safe, unadulterated, honestly presented food
- C. License chefs
- D. Regulate restaurant advertising

2. The FDA Food Code is best described as:

- A. A model code offered for adoption
- B. A cookbook
- C. A federal tax law
- D. A restaurant rating guide

3. Which chapter focuses on Management and Personnel?

- A. Chapter 2
- B. Chapter 3
- C. Chapter 6
- D. Chapter 8

4. Which chapter contains the main requirements for food receiving, cooking, cooling, and holding?

- A. Chapter 2
- B. Chapter 3
- C. Chapter 5
- D. Chapter 7

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5. Which chapter focuses on equipment, utensils, and linens?

- A. Chapter 3
- B. Chapter 4
- C. Chapter 6
- D. Chapter 8

6. Water, plumbing, sewage, and refuse are primarily addressed in:

- A. Chapter 2
- B. Chapter 4
- C. Chapter 5
- D. Chapter 7

7. Floors, walls, ceilings, lighting, and pest-resistant outer openings are addressed in:

- A. Chapter 3
- B. Chapter 5
- C. Chapter 6
- D. Chapter 8

8. Poisonous or toxic materials are addressed in:

- A. Chapter 4
- B. Chapter 5
- C. Chapter 7
- D. Chapter 8

9. Compliance and Enforcement is:

- A. Chapter 3
- B. Chapter 6
- C. Chapter 7
- D. Chapter 8

10. A food-contact surface is a surface that:

- A. Never touches food
- B. Food normally touches or from which food may drain, drip, or splash into food or onto another food-contact surface
- C. Is only found on floors
- D. Is used only outdoors

11. The Person in Charge is primarily associated with:

- A. Managing the food establishment's operation at that time
- B. Delivering mail
- C. Repairing roads
- D. Advertising

12. Food Defense refers to protecting food from:

- A. Normal cooling
- B. Intentional adulteration or tampering
- C. Menu changes
- D. Refrigeration

13. TCS food requires control of:

- A. Menu price
- B. Time and temperature for safety
- C. Lighting only
- D. Employee uniforms

14. Which chapter contains employee illness reporting and handwashing requirements?

- A. Chapter 2
- B. Chapter 4
- C. Chapter 5

- D. Chapter 8

15. Cooked TCS food is generally cooled from 135°F to 70°F within:

- A. 1 hour
- B. 2 hours
- C. 4 hours
- D. 6 hours

16. Cooked TCS food must generally reach 41°F or less within a total of:

- A. 2 hours
- B. 4 hours
- C. 6 hours
- D. 10 hours

17. Hot-held TCS food is generally maintained at:

- A. 100°F or above
- B. 120°F or above
- C. 135°F or above
- D. 165°F or above

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18. Cold-held TCS food is generally maintained at:

- A. 32°F or less
- B. 41°F or less
- C. 45°F or less in all cases
- D. 50°F or less

19. The general manual warewashing sequence is:

- A. Sanitize, wash, rinse
- B. Wash, rinse, sanitize, air-dry
- C. Rinse, sanitize, wash
- D. Wash and towel-dry only

20. Manual hot-water sanitizing generally requires at least:

- A. 110°F
- B. 135°F
- C. 160°F
- D. 171°F

21. Which chapter addresses backflow prevention?

- A. Chapter 2

- B. Chapter 5
- C. Chapter 7
- D. Chapter 8

22. Which lighting level is associated with food-preparation surfaces where employee safety is a factor?

- A. 5 foot-candles
- B. 10 foot-candles
- C. 20 foot-candles
- D. 50 foot-candles

23. A working spray bottle of sanitizer should be:

- A. Unlabeled
- B. Labeled with the common name
- C. Stored above food
- D. Reused later for sauce

24. A chemical container that previously held a toxic material may be reused for food:

- A. If rinsed
- B. If sanitized
- C. Never
- D. If the manager approves

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25. A Priority Item contributes directly to:

- A. Decorating the facility
- B. Eliminating, preventing, or reducing a foodborne-illness or injury hazard
- C. Employee scheduling
- D. Advertising

26. The model Code generally calls for routine inspection at least once every:

- A. Month
- B. 3 months
- C. 6 months
- D. 5 years

27. When an imminent health hazard exists, the establishment generally must:

- A. Ignore it
- B. Discontinue affected operations and notify the regulatory authority
- C. Wait for the next routine inspection
- D. Only change the menu

28. The 2026 Code adds a definition for:

- A. Food Safety Management System
- B. Restaurant profit
- C. Customer loyalty
- D. Table service

29. Which statement best describes food safety?

- A. It depends only on cooking temperature
- B. It is a system involving people, food, equipment, water, facilities, chemicals, and regulatory controls
- C. It is only the inspector's responsibility
- D. It applies only to restaurants

30. When a jurisdiction adopts the FDA Food Code, the food establishment should follow:

- A. Only the federal PDF
- B. The requirements adopted and enforced by its applicable regulatory authority
- C. Any rule chosen by employees
- D. Only older editions

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Answer Key

1–10	11–20	21–30
1. B	11. A	21. B
2. A	12. B	22. D
3. A	13. B	23. B
4. B	14. A	24. C
5. B	15. B	25. B
6. C	16. C	26. C
7. C	17. C	27. B
8. C	18. B	28. A
9. D	19. B	29. B
10. B	20. D	30. B

Source and Training Use

Primary source: U.S. Food and Drug Administration, 2026 Food Code. Chapter 1 — Purpose and Definitions provides the foundation for this introductory coursebook. The summaries of Chapters 2 through 8 are designed as an orientation to the major subjects’ students will study in the individual chapter coursebooks. This material paraphrases the model Food Code for instruction; consult the official Code and applicable regulatory authority for exact regulatory language and jurisdiction-specific requirements.

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