When it comes to food safety with takeout or grab and go meals, focus on three steps to keeping food safe: Clean, Cook, and Chill.

### Food Safety Tips for Takeout Containers

- **Clean**
  - Wash hands with soap and water. Additionally, wash any surfaces that come in contact with food or what the food was picked up or delivered in.
  - Ask for contactless delivery. This can prevent transferring harmful germs from person to person.
  - Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables that come with the meal.

- **Cook**
  - Keep hot foods hot. If a meal is received hot, eat it right away or keep it hot at 140°F or above until you are ready to eat it. Always use a food thermometer to make sure the food is at a safe temperature.
  - Two-Hour Rule: Cooked food should not sit at room temperature for more than two hours. It only takes two hours for harmful bacteria to multiply to a quantity that could cause foodborne illnesses.

- **Chill**
  - Move food from takeout containers into a skillet, pot, or sauces pan, and keep food hot on the stovetop.
  - Use the oven. Preheat oven and place food on an oven-safe pan or dish. Cover with aluminum foil to prevent food from drying out.
  - Place cooked food in a preheated slow cooker to keep hot. Never reheat food in a cold slow cooker.
Reheating

If the meal will not be eaten right away, divide it into smaller portions and store in the refrigerator. Use shallow food-safe containers, no more than four inches deep. **Use a food thermometer to reheat food to 165°F, no matter the food or method.**

- Microwave: cover and rotate food, so it is cooked evenly.
- When reheating gravies, sauces, and soups, bring to a boil.
- Store leftovers in the refrigerator 3 to 4 days.

Can I reheat in every kitchen appliance?

- **Safe for reheating:** oven (no lower than 325°F), stove-top, microwave oven
- **Not safe for reheating:** slow cooker, chafing dish

Chill

If a meal is received cold, it should be kept at a temperature of 40°F or below.

How to safely keep “cold food cold” once home

- Keep refrigerator set at 40°F or below.
- Store items immediately in the refrigerator until use. If a fridge isn’t available, store cold food in small portions surrounded by ice or ice packs.
- Check food temperatures using a food thermometer to ensure food is staying at 40°F or below.

Sources
