The Flow of Food
Guidelines for Food Preparation

Thawing

- Move frozen food from your freezer to the refrigerator and within **24-48 hours** it should thaw, depending on the thickness of the food.

- **NEVER** thaw food at room temperature or leave it in a sink with standing water.

- Thaw food in your microwave **ONLY IF** you will be cooking the food right away.

- **NEVER** thaw food in the microwave and put it back in the refrigerator to be cooked at a later time.

Handling

- **WASH YOUR HANDS** before handling fruit or other food that does not require cooking.

- Use spatulas, tongs, wax paper or other kitchen tools to **limit hand contact with food**.

- **ALWAYS** wash your hands after touching raw food and before moving from one type of food to another.
Cooking

- Use a metal-stem thermometer that measures from 0-220°F to test hot and cold food temperatures.
- Keep hot foods hot at 135°F or higher and keep cold foods cold at 41°F or less to prevent germs from growing on your food.

Cooling

- Use shallow pans, bowls or trays. Food will cool faster if it is in smaller portions and thin layers.
- Cut large pieces into smaller pieces.
- Do not cover your food with plastic wrap or foil until it is cooled to room temperature.

Storage

- Use a metal-stem thermometer to check the temperature of your refrigerator. Food keeps best at 41°F or lower.
- Throw away any perishables (food that can spoil) which are left at room temperature for longer than 2 hours.
- At 90°F or higher, throw away perishable food after 1 hour.

For more information
Cuyahoga County Board of Health
ccbh.net
US Food & Drug Administration
fda.gov/food