

How to check a food probe

For digital probe thermometers. Do both tests. Both must be in range.

Not for infra-red thermometers or fridge displays - follow the maker's instructions for those.

Before you start

Clean and disinfect the probe before and after.

LAW

GUIDANCE

Do the iced water test first, then boiling.

OUR ADVICE

Iced water

GUIDANCE

-1°C to 1°C

- 1 Fill a jug to the top with crushed ice. Add cold water to just below the top of the ice, and stir.
- 2 Put the tip in the middle of the jug, off the sides and the bottom.
- 3 Wait for the reading to settle.
- 4 Write the number down.

Too much water and not enough ice reads high.

Boiling water

GUIDANCE

99°C to 101°C

- 1 Bring a pan of water to a full rolling boil on the hob, and keep it boiling.
Not kettle water poured into a cup - it cools and reads low.
- 2 Hold the probe by its handle. Put the tip in the water, away from the sides and the bottom of the pan.
- 3 Wait for the reading to settle.
- 4 Write the number down.

CAREFUL - boiling water and steam scald.

Turn the pan handle in.

Hold the probe by its handle and keep your hand out of the steam.

Keep the probe body and cable dry and away from the hot pan, unless the maker says they can go in the water.

The metal tip stays hot after the test.

On high ground or a stormy, low-pressure day, water boils a little below 100°C (about 1°C lower for every 300 metres). If iced water is fine and boiling reads just under 99°C, test again on a full boil. Still under 99°C? Treat it as out of range.

If it reads out of range

- 1 Test again once, straight away - plenty of ice, or a full rolling boil.
- 2 Still out? Stop using that probe for food checks. Use one that has passed.
- 3 Replace it, or send it back to the maker to be calibrated. **GUIDANCE**
- 4 Think about food checked with it since its last good check. Probe it again with a good probe.
- 5 Write down both tries, not just the second.

How often

As the maker's instructions say. If there are none, regularly - for example once a month.

GUIDANCE

Scotland: CookSafe has a monthly probe check record.

GUIDANCE

Check every probe you use, and again after a drop, a battery change or odd readings.

OUR ADVICE

Write down

Date

Which probe

Iced water reading

Boiling water reading

In range or out

What you did

Who checked

Or record it in the ChefsRecords app.

GUIDANCE = the FSA's Safer Food, Better Business pack (England and Wales) and CookSafe (Scotland).

OUR ADVICE = ChefsRecords' own tips.

LAW = all four nations.

This is a kitchen accuracy check, not a calibration certificate.

The ranges are guidance from the FSA's Safer Food, Better Business pack (England and Wales) and Food Standards Scotland's CookSafe. No UK law requires a probe check or says how often. Northern Ireland: Safe Catering says check your thermometer at least twice a year.

Checked 25 October 2026. Not an FSA, Food Standards Scotland or council document. General information, not advice.

chefsrecords.com/guides/probe-check/



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