SAFE MEAT & POULTRY INTERNAL TEMPERATURE GUIDE

USDA CULINARY SAFETY CHEAT SHEET | INTERNAL PULL TEMPS, DONENESS & RESTING RULES

THE DANGER ZONE LAW (40°F TO 140°F / 4°C TO 60°C):
Harmful bacteria multiply most rapidly between 40°F and 140°F. Never leave cooked meat at room temperature for more than 2 hours.

MASTER INTERNAL COOKING TEMPERATURE MATRIX

Meat Type & Cut	Doneness Level	Pull From Heat	Finished Temp	Mandatory Rest Time
Beef, Veal & Lamb Steaks / Roasts	Rare (Cool Red Center)	120°F (49°C)	**125°F (52°C)**	5 - 8 Mins on warm board
Beef, Veal & Lamb Steaks / Roasts	Medium-Rare (Warm Red)	130°F (54°C)	**135°F (57°C)**	5 - 8 Mins (Chef Choice)
Beef, Veal & Lamb Steaks / Roasts	Medium (Warm Pink)	140°F (60°C)	**145°F (63°C)**	5 - 8 Mins
Beef, Veal & Lamb Steaks / Roasts	Medium-Well (Slight Pink)	145°F (63°C)	**150°F (66°C)**	5 Mins
Beef, Veal & Lamb Steaks / Roasts	Well Done (No Pink)	155°F (68°C)	**160°F+ (71°C)**	5 Mins
Ground Meats (Beef, Pork, Lamb)	Fully Cooked	155°F (68°C)	**160°F (71°C)**	No resting needed
Whole Poultry (Chicken, Turkey)	Juicy & Tender	160°F (71°C)	**165°F (74°C)**	15 - 20 Mins (Rest loosely tented)
Poultry Breasts & Thighs	Fully Cooked	160°F (71°C)	**165°F (74°C)**	5 - 8 Mins
Ground Poultry (Chicken & Turkey)	Fully Cooked	160°F (71°C)	**165°F (74°C)**	No resting needed
Pork Chops, Roasts & Tenderloin	Medium (Blushing Pink)	140°F (60°C)	**145°F (63°C)**	3 Mins (USDA Standard)
Pork Chops & Roasts	Well Done	155°F (68°C)	**160°F (71°C)**	3 Mins
Fresh Raw Ham	Fully Cooked	140°F (60°C)	**145°F (63°C)**	3 Mins
Precooked Reheated Ham	Reheated	135°F (57°C)	**140°F (60°C)**	None
Fin Fish (Salmon, Halibut, Cod)	Flaky & Opaque	140°F (60°C)	**145°F (63°C)**	2 - 3 Mins
Shrimp, Lobster & Crab	Pearlescent / Opaque	140°F (60°C)	**145°F (63°C)**	Serve immediately
Leftovers & Casseroles	Steaming Hot	160°F (71°C)	**165°F (74°C)**	Rest 2 mins before serving

PROBE THERMOMETER BEST PRACTICES

The Thickest Part Rule
Insert thermometer probe into the geometric center of the thickest part of the meat, avoiding bone, gristle, and large fat pockets.

Whole Birds & Poultry
Check the innermost part of the thigh, innermost part of the wing, and thickest part of the breast. Do not let probe touch the bone.

Burger Patties & Steaks
Insert probe sideways through the center edge of the patty or steak so the sensor is completely immersed in meat tissue.

Instant-Read vs Leave-In
Use leave-in probes for long roasts / smokers. Use fast instant-read pen thermometers (2-3 second reading) for searing and grilling.

THE PHYSICS OF CARRYOVER COOKING & RESTING

What is Carryover Cooking?
Meat continues to cook after being removed from the heat source. Surface residual thermal energy migrates into the core, raising temp 3°F to 10°F.

Always Pull Early
Pull steaks and chops 5°F below target temp. Pull large roasts, whole turkeys, and briskets 8°F - 10°F below target temp.

Juice Redistribution
During cooking, heat contracts muscle fibers, forcing juices into the center. Resting relaxes fibers, allowing juices to reabsorb evenly throughout the meat.

Tent Loosely (Never Wrap Tight)
Tent resting meat loosely with foil. Wrapping tightly traps steam, turning crisp seared crusts soft and soggy.