Food Manager

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Practice Questions

Try all 30 first, then check the answer key at the back.

1. A prep cook is diagnosed with Hepatitis A after working three days while experiencing fatigue and nausea but no jaundice yet. Which action is MOST appropriate for the person in charge?

A. Allow the employee to work if they wear gloves at all times
B. Restrict the employee to dishwashing duties away from food
C. Restrict the employee from working with ready-to-eat foods until jaundice appears
D. Exclude the employee from the operation and notify the regulatory authority

2. Which pathogen is uniquely hazardous among common foodborne organisms because it can grow and multiply at refrigeration temperatures as low as 32°F (0°C), making cold storage alone an insufficient control for contaminated ready-to-eat deli meats and soft cheeses?

A. Listeria monocytogenes
B. Salmonella Typhi
C. Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli (STEC)
D. Nontyphoidal Salmonella

3. A guest informs a server that they have a severe tree nut allergy. The kitchen uses shared fryers for items containing cashews and plain french fries. What is the BEST response?

A. Inform the guest that fries are safe because the oil is filtered daily
B. Advise the guest that fries cannot be guaranteed allergen-free due to shared fryer cross-contact
C. Skim the fryer oil before preparing the guest's order
D. Cook the fries at a higher temperature to destroy the allergen proteins

4. A foodborne illness cluster is traced to a restaurant where a server with no gastrointestinal symptoms handled bread rolls. Stool cultures confirm the server is an asymptomatic carrier of Salmonella Typhi. Under FDA Food Code, this employee must be:

A. Restricted from bare-hand contact with ready-to-eat food only
B. Excluded from the operation until cleared by a medical practitioner or health authority
C. Allowed to work normally because no symptoms are present
D. Restricted to non-food-contact duties such as mopping floors

5. Which of the following was added as the ninth major food allergen in the United States under the FASTER Act of 2021?

A. Sesame
B. Gelatin
C. Garlic
D. Corn

6. A large pot of beef stew is placed into an ice-water bath after service. After 2 hours, a probe thermometer reads 75°F (24°C). What should the person in charge do?

A. Portion the stew into smaller containers and refrigerate for up to 2 more hours
B. Reheat the stew to 165°F and then restart the cooling process
C. Continue cooling in the refrigerator — the remaining 4-hour window still applies
D. Discard the stew because the 2-hour cooling milestone of 70°F was not met

7. Norovirus is the leading cause of foodborne illness outbreaks in the U.S. Which characteristic makes it especially difficult to control compared to most bacterial pathogens?

A. It produces heat-stable toxins that survive cooking temperatures
B. It multiplies rapidly in the temperature danger zone between 41°F and 135°F
C. It requires fewer than 20 viral particles to cause infection and can persist on surfaces for weeks
D. It forms protective spores that resist chlorine-based sanitizers

8. Which of the Big 6 pathogens is primarily spread via the fecal-oral route through infected food handlers and has such a low infectious dose (as few as 10 organisms) that poor hand hygiene is the critical control point?

A. Cryptosporidium parvum
B. Shigella spp.
C. Shiga toxin-producing E. coli (STEC O157:H7)
D. Nontyphoidal Salmonella

9. A caterer vacuum-seals cooked salmon and stores it at 38°F. After 12 days the fish appears and smells normal, but a guest develops descending paralysis. Which organism and mechanism BEST explains this outcome?

A. Clostridium perfringens, which produces odorless toxins at low temperatures
B. Bacillus cereus, which activates spores in vacuum-sealed environments to form neurotoxin
C. Listeria monocytogenes, which produces a heat-stable toxin undetectable by sensory evaluation
D. Non-proteolytic Clostridium botulinum type E, which grows at near-refrigeration temperatures and produces toxin without spoilage signs

10. During an inspection, glass cleaner is stored on a shelf directly above commercially packaged dry pasta. This situation represents which type of contamination hazard?

A. Biological contamination from mold spores in the cleaning product
B. Chemical contamination from improper storage of toxic compounds above food
C. Physical contamination from airborne glass particles
D. Cross-contamination from a non-food-contact surface

11. A restaurant serves tableside Caesar dressing made with raw egg yolk. The dish is not identified as containing a raw or undercooked animal product on the menu. Under FDA Food Code, this operation is:

A. In compliance because lemon juice acidification eliminates Salmonella
B. Required to include a consumer advisory disclosing the presence of raw or undercooked eggs
C. In violation only if the dish is served to a highly susceptible population
D. In compliance if the eggs used are pasteurized in-shell

12. A guest with a wheat allergy orders gluten-free pasta. The cook uses dedicated gluten-free pasta but boils it in water previously used for regular semolina pasta. This error is an example of:

A. Chemical contamination from residual pasta starch
B. Allergen cross-contact through shared cooking water
C. Direct contamination from an unsafe food source
D. Biological contamination from wheat proteins acting as a growth medium

13. A food handler who has been vomiting since the previous evening reports to work and claims to feel better. What is the correct action under FDA Food Code?

A. Exclude the employee from the operation until at least 24 hours after symptoms resolve
B. Allow the employee to work if they have not vomited in the past two hours
C. Allow the employee to work if they wear a mask and gloves throughout the shift
D. Restrict the employee to tasks that do not involve food preparation

14. A restaurant prepares a 'house-made' canned tomato sauce in large batches and stores it in sealed jars at room temperature. Weeks later, diners develop descending flaccid paralysis. The most likely explanation is:

A. Improper home-style canning created an anaerobic low-acid environment enabling Clostridium botulinum spore germination and toxin production
B. Inadequate acidification allowed Staphylococcus aureus to produce heat-stable toxins in the sealed jars
C. Bacillus cereus spores survived cooking and produced emetic toxin under anaerobic storage conditions
D. Nontyphoidal Salmonella multiplied in the sealed jars during room-temperature storage

15. Which of the following physical contaminants found in prepared food requires a formal corrective action investigation because it represents a process control failure rather than a naturally occurring material?

A. A small fragment of natural bone in commercially processed ground turkey
B. A hard plastic shard from a broken cutting board found in a prepared salad
C. A grain of sand in unrinsed fresh herbs
D. A piece of plant stem in a pre-washed salad mix

16. A food worker pulls a pot of chicken soup off the stove at 4:00 PM. The soup measures 141°F. The worker places it in a shallow pan in the walk-in cooler. At 6:00 PM the soup reads 68°F. By what time must it reach 41°F?

A. 8:00 PM
B. 10:00 PM
C. Midnight
D. The soup has already failed the cooling requirement

17. A cook is preparing a beef roast stuffed with a bread-and-sausage mixture. Which minimum internal temperature applies to this product?

A. 155°F for 17 seconds, because the stuffing contains ground pork
B. 160°F for 0 seconds, because USDA rules override FDA Food Code for beef
C. 165°F for 15 seconds, because the stuffing turns it into a combination product
D. 145°F for 15 seconds, because the outer surface is whole beef

18. Which of the following foods is NOT classified as a TCS (Time/Temperature Control for Safety) food?

A. Dry crackers
B. Tofu
C. Sliced cantaloupe
D. Cooked rice

19. Leftover cooked chili is removed from the refrigerator and placed on the steam table for lunch service. The chili must be reheated to what minimum temperature before it is placed in hot-holding equipment?

A. 155°F
B. 145°F
C. 165°F
D. 135°F

20. A chef partially cooks chicken breasts to 120°F and immediately places them in the refrigerator to finish cooking later. Under FDA Food Code, this practice is:

A. Acceptable if the total time in the danger zone stays under 4 hours
B. Acceptable if the chicken reaches 165°F during final cooking
C. Never acceptable under any circumstances in a retail food establishment
D. Only acceptable with a written HACCP plan approved by the regulatory authority

21. Hot soup is being held in a steam table. A food handler checks the temperature and reads 128°F. What is the correct immediate action?

A. Discard the soup because it has been in the danger zone
B. Continue service if the soup has only been on the steam table for less than 2 hours
C. Add boiling water to the soup to bring the temperature up
D. Reheat the soup to 165°F and adjust the steam table, then re-check temperature

22. A catering company transports cooked salmon in insulated containers. Upon arrival at the venue 2.5 hours later, the salmon reads 130°F. It is served immediately. Which statement best describes this situation?

A. Compliant, because food in transit is exempt from temperature rules for up to 4 hours
B. Compliant, because the salmon was above 70°F and never fully entered the danger zone
C. Non-compliant only if the total transport time exceeded the 4-hour time-temperature limit
D. Non-compliant, because hot-held TCS food must be maintained at 135°F or above at all times

23. What is the maximum cold-holding temperature for TCS foods stored in a refrigeration unit?

A. 38°F
B. 32°F
C. 45°F
D. 41°F

24. A cook grills a hamburger patty to an internal temperature of 155°F and holds it for how long to meet FDA Food Code's pathogen destruction requirement for ground beef?

A. 4 minutes
B. 0 seconds — instantaneous kill at 155°F
C. 15 seconds
D. 17 seconds

25. A manager applies Time as a Public Health Control (TPHC) for sliced tomatoes set out at room temperature. Under FDA Food Code, which condition is required?

A. TPHC is only permitted for beverages, not cut produce
B. The tomatoes must be returned to refrigeration every 2 hours to reset the clock
C. The tomatoes must be discarded within 2 hours if they were held cold first
D. The tomatoes may be held at room temperature for up to 4 hours and must be discarded if not served by that time

26. Fresh oysters on the half-shell are received at 44°F. What action should the manager take?

A. Accept them; live shellfish may be received at up to 45°F
B. Reject them; all TCS seafood must be received at 41°F or below
C. Accept them if the accompanying shellstock identification tag is present
D. Place them immediately in ice and accept them

27. A thick pot of beef stew (volume: 5 gallons) needs to be cooled rapidly. After 2 hours in an ice-water bath with occasional stirring, the center reads 74°F. What should the food manager do?

A. Discard the stew; it failed the first phase of the cooling requirement
B. Move it to the refrigerator immediately; the second phase grants 4 more hours to reach 41°F
C. Divide it into smaller containers and continue cooling; the clock resets upon division
D. Continue cooling in the ice-water bath; 6 total hours are allowed from 135°F

28. A food worker uses a steam table to reheat leftover cooked vegetables for a buffet. After 45 minutes the vegetables reach 130°F and stay there. What is wrong with this procedure?

A. Steam tables cannot be used for any vegetable products
B. The time limit for reheating on a steam table is 30 minutes, which has been exceeded
C. Reheating must reach 165°F for 15 seconds before placing food into hot-holding equipment
D. Vegetables only need to reach 135°F for reheating, so the process is almost compliant

29. Which of the following cooking temperatures and holding times satisfies the FDA Food Code requirement for whole-muscle beef steaks cooked using a standard cooking method?

A. 145°F for 15 seconds
B. 160°F for 0 seconds
C. 150°F for 1 second
D. 155°F for 17 seconds

30. A food establishment receives vacuum-packaged smoked fish labeled 'Keep Refrigerated.' The product tests at 38°F on arrival. Which additional food safety concern is most specific to this packaging format?

A. The product is a TCS food because smoke flavoring lowers water activity below safe levels
B. Vacuum packaging creates an anaerobic environment that can support growth of Clostridium botulinum even at refrigeration temperatures if temperature abuse occurs
C. Vacuum packaging is prohibited for retail fish under FDA Food Code
D. Smoked fish must always be held at 32°F or below to prevent Listeria growth

Answer Key & Explanations

1. D — Exclude the employee from the operation and notify the regulatory authority
Hepatitis A is one of the Big 6 highly contagious pathogens requiring immediate exclusion from the operation (not merely restriction), and the regulatory authority must be notified because the illness is reportable under FDA Food Code 2-201.12.

2. A — Listeria monocytogenes
Listeria monocytogenes is psychrotrophic and can multiply at refrigeration temperatures (32°F/0°C and above), which is why time-temperature controls during cold storage are insufficient safeguards for Listeria-contaminated ready-to-eat products.

3. B — Advise the guest that fries cannot be guaranteed allergen-free due to shared fryer cross-contact
Cooking does not destroy allergen proteins, and shared fryer oil transfers allergenic residues; the operation must honestly disclose the cross-contact risk so the guest can make an informed decision, consistent with FDA allergen communication standards.

4. B — Excluded from the operation until cleared by a medical practitioner or health authority
Salmonella Typhi is one of the Big 6 pathogens; even asymptomatic carriers must be fully excluded from the operation (not merely restricted) under FDA Food Code 2-201.12 due to the high risk of fecal-oral transmission.

5. A — Sesame
The FASTER Act (2021) added sesame as the ninth major allergen, joining milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, and soybeans as required label disclosures on packaged foods.

6. D — Discard the stew because the 2-hour cooling milestone of 70°F was not met
FDA Food Code requires food to cool from 135°F to 70°F within the first 2 hours; if 70°F is not reached within that window, the food has failed the first stage of the two-stage cooling requirement and must be discarded.

7. C — It requires fewer than 20 viral particles to cause infection and can persist on surfaces for weeks
Norovirus has an extremely low infectious dose (as few as 18 viral particles) and can persist on hard surfaces for days to weeks; unlike bacteria, it does not replicate in food, but infectious quantities are deposited during handling by ill workers.

8. B — Shigella spp.
Shigella spp. is one of the Big 6 pathogens with a very low infectious dose; outbreaks are overwhelmingly linked to infected food handlers failing to practice proper handwashing, making it a key reason for excluding ill workers.

9. D — Non-proteolytic Clostridium botulinum type E, which grows at near-refrigeration temperatures and produces toxin without spoilage signs

Non-proteolytic Clostridium botulinum type E can grow and produce lethal neurotoxin at temperatures as low as 38°F in oxygen-reduced environments without producing off-odors or visible spoilage, which is why vacuum-packed fish is a regulated reduced-oxygen packaging concern under FDA Food Code.

10. B — Chemical contamination from improper storage of toxic compounds above food
Storing chemicals above food items risks chemical contamination through spills or drips; FDA Food Code requires toxic materials to be stored separately from and never above food, equipment, or single-use articles.

11. B — Required to include a consumer advisory disclosing the presence of raw or undercooked eggs
FDA Food Code Section 3-603.11 requires a consumer advisory — both a disclosure and a reminder — whenever a menu item contains raw or undercooked animal products (including eggs), because acid ingredients such as lemon juice do not reliably eliminate Salmonella.

12. B — Allergen cross-contact through shared cooking water
Boiling gluten-free pasta in water that previously cooked wheat-containing pasta transfers wheat allergen proteins to the dish; this is allergen cross-contact and requires dedicated separate cooking water to prevent harm to guests with wheat allergy.

13. A — Exclude the employee from the operation until at least 24 hours after symptoms resolve
FDA Food Code requires food handlers with vomiting to be excluded and to remain symptom-free for at least 24 hours before returning, because vomiting can indicate highly contagious viral illness such as norovirus that may still be shed after symptoms appear to improve.

14. A — Improper home-style canning created an anaerobic low-acid environment enabling Clostridium botulinum spore germination and toxin production
Improper canning without pressure processing leaves an anaerobic, low-acid environment in which Clostridium botulinum spores can germinate and produce botulinum neurotoxin; descending flaccid paralysis is the hallmark presentation, and pressure canning is the required control to destroy spores in low-acid foods.

15. B — A hard plastic shard from a broken cutting board found in a prepared salad
Hard plastic from broken equipment is an extraneous foreign material of artificial origin posing clear injury risk; unlike naturally occurring bone or plant matter, equipment-derived plastic represents a HACCP process control failure requiring investigation and corrective action under FDA food safety regulations.

16. B — 10:00 PM
The FDA Food Code requires TCS food to cool from 135°F to 70°F within 2 hours, then from 70°F to 41°F within the next 4 hours — so phase two must complete by 10:00 PM (6:00 PM + 4 hours).

17. C — 165°F for 15 seconds, because the stuffing turns it into a combination product
FDA Food Code requires stuffed meats and stuffing containing meat to reach 165°F for 15 seconds, because the stuffing can harbor pathogens at the same level of risk as poultry.

18. A — Dry crackers
Dry crackers have low water activity and low moisture content, placing them outside the TCS category; cooked rice, cut melons, and tofu all support pathogen growth and are TCS foods.

19. C — 165°F
FDA Food Code requires previously cooked and cooled TCS food that is reheated for hot holding to reach an internal temperature of 165°F for 15 seconds within 2 hours.

20. D — Only acceptable with a written HACCP plan approved by the regulatory authority
FDA Food Code permits a 'cook-cool-reheat' or interrupted cooking process only when the operation has a documented procedure approved by the regulatory authority that ensures the food will not support pathogen growth during the interval.

21. D — Reheat the soup to 165°F and adjust the steam table, then re-check temperature
FDA Food Code requires hot-held TCS food to stay at 135°F or above; when found below that threshold it must be rapidly reheated to 165°F for 15 seconds before hot-holding continues — the steam table itself is not reheating equipment.

22. D — Non-compliant, because hot-held TCS food must be maintained at 135°F or above at all times
FDA Food Code sets the hot-holding minimum at 135°F with no exception for transport duration; 130°F is inside the danger zone and the food is non-compliant regardless of elapsed time.

23. D — 41°F
FDA Food Code specifies 41°F (5°C) as the maximum temperature for cold-holding TCS foods to limit the growth of pathogens.

24. D — 17 seconds
FDA Food Code requires ground beef to reach 155°F and be held at that temperature for 17 seconds to achieve sufficient pathogen lethality, unlike whole-muscle beef which requires 145°F for 15 seconds (or 4 minutes at 145°F).

25. D — The tomatoes may be held at room temperature for up to 4 hours and must be discarded if not served by that time
FDA Food Code allows TPHC for TCS food at room temperature for a maximum of 4 hours total (if removed from 41°F or below), after which the food must be discarded — it cannot be re-cooled and re-used.

26. A — Accept them; live shellfish may be received at up to 45°F
FDA Food Code provides a specific receiving exception for live shellfish (oysters, clams, mussels, scallops), permitting receipt at an internal temperature of 45°F or below — not the standard 41°F limit applied to other TCS seafood.

27. A — Discard the stew; it failed the first phase of the cooling requirement
FDA Food Code requires TCS food to drop from 135°F to 70°F within the first 2 hours of cooling; a reading of 74°F at the 2-hour mark means the food has failed this mandatory checkpoint and must be discarded.

28. C — Reheating must reach 165°F for 15 seconds before placing food into hot-holding equipment
FDA Food Code prohibits using hot-holding equipment (including steam tables) to reheat food; previously cooked TCS food must be reheated to 165°F for 15 seconds in a proper cooking device before being transferred to the steam table for hot-holding.

29. A — 145°F for 15 seconds
FDA Food Code specifies that whole-muscle intact beef (e.g., steaks) must reach a minimum internal temperature of 145°F and be held for 15 seconds to achieve the required pathogen reduction.

30. B — Vacuum packaging creates an anaerobic environment that can support growth of Clostridium botulinum even at refrigeration temperatures if temperature abuse occurs
FDA Food Code highlights that reduced-oxygen packaged (ROP) fish present an elevated risk for Clostridium botulinum Type E, which can grow slowly even at refrigerator temperatures in anaerobic conditions, making strict cold-chain control critical.

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