

Reduced Oxygen Packaging - Cook-Chill and Sous Vide Processes

Do you perform Cook-Chill or Sous Vide in your establishment?

To find out if you do, consider the following questions:

1. Do you cook food and while it is still hot, fill the food into impermeable bags that have the air expelled and are then sealed or crimped closed? If you then cool the food while still in the sealed or closed bag, this is considered Cook-Chill packaging. Some common foods that are prepared this way include soups and sauces.
2. Do you place raw or partially cooked foods into a hermetically sealed, impermeable bag, cook the food in the bag, and then rapidly chill the food still in the bag? This is considered Sous Vide packaging. Some common foods cooked by the Sous Vide method include steak, chicken, fish, and vegetables.

If you conduct either of these processes, you are allowed without a variance, but a HACCP Plan must be developed and implemented.

Why is a HACCP Plan Required?

Packaging and sealing foods in a bag creates an ideal environment for the growth of some pathogens and toxins that can cause customer illness. Following the items listed for a HACCP plan includes controls and safeguards against the growth of those pathogens and toxins.

In WI Food Code 3-502.12(D), a HACCP Plan must include:

- Food must be cooled within a specific time/temperature requirement and stored for a limited time
- Foods must be held in a refrigeration unit that is equipped with an electronic system that continuously monitors time and temperature and is visually examined for proper operation twice daily
- Maintain records for cooling and holding temperatures/times
- Written procedures and an employee training program

Before implementing the HACCP Plan, consult with Outagamie County Public Health Division for assistance.