

# Chile Roasting Food Safety

State of New Mexico  
*ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT*



**Cooling is critical**—whether you roast your own raw chile or have it roasted for you, it is important to not delay in cooling your prize.

**Why?** The roasting process does not sterilize chile—some bacteria protect themselves against high temperature and can survive the fire. As your chile begins to cool, it passes through a range of temperatures that these bacteria like. In this temperature range the bacteria will begin to multiply rapidly and will eventually be numerous enough to cause spoilage or make you sick!

**What can you do?** Limit the amount of time that your chile spends in this “Danger Zone” of temperature. The danger zone ranges from 140° F (too hot to touch) to 41° F (refrigerator temperature). If you can get your food through this zone within four hours you should have a tasty and healthy product.

## **Tips:**

- 1) Find a freezer fast—a long car trip is just the thing that bacteria would love. If you do have a drive ahead of you, pack the chile in ice.
- 2) Do not leave warm chile out to cool down at room temperature—be aggressive and start cooling sooner than later.
- 3) When refrigerating/freezing you should reduce the volume of chile into small portions and do not stack. You can always re-arrange after it is frozen.
- 4) Wash hands often or wear gloves when handling food—your body carries bacteria and viruses that can make yourself or others sick if it is eaten.
- 5) If your chile is frozen, make sure you thaw it in a way that keeps it out of the “danger zone”. Thawing in the refrigerator is always best, but if you can’t wait then try placing it under cool running water in the sink.

Note: These food safety rules apply to any type of food that is to be cooled down for later use (i.e. leftovers, meats, soups, sauces, beans) not just chile!!

For additional information feel free to contact Mary Lou LaCasse or Brian Robertson at the New Mexico Environment Department. Phone: (505) 524-6300.