
Hot Beverage Safety

Coffee, tea, hot chocolate, and other hot beverages may be served or available for self-dispensing at temperatures greater than 160°F (71°C). Liquid at this temperature can cause third-degree burns on contact with human skin. Beverage servers may be liable for burns caused by accidental beverage spills. This handout provides recommendations for serving hot beverages safely.

General

- Regulate the temperature of hot beverages.
- Monitor brewing and holding temperatures.
- Protect customers from spills when pouring beverages.
- Use cups, mugs, or other containers that are appropriate for hot beverages.
- Do not overfill containers.
- Promptly assist customers who are harmed by beverage spills.

Take Away Service

- Locate beverage dispensers behind service counters and away from customers.
- Cap take-out beverage containers before giving them to customers.
- Place filled containers directly on the service counter; do not hand them directly to customers.
- Provide trays or other carriers for multiple cups to avoid stacking.
- When serving children, make sure they can carry the containers easily.
- Consider providing beverage container sleeves to protect hands from the temperature of a beverage.

Table Service

- Inspect the serving pitcher for defects before bringing it to the table.
- Place the cup to be filled on a table or tray before pouring the beverage; never pour hot beverages while the customer is holding the cup.
- Do not reach over people to pour.
- Set down filled cups away from the table edge and in front of the customer.
- Never place hot beverages within reach of a young child.

Self-Service Beverage Station

- Inspect pots and carafes for loose handles, cracks, or other defects.
- Set beverage holding and dispensing equipment back from counter edges.
- Provide lids for customer use.

- Clean up leaks and spills to reduce accident hazards.