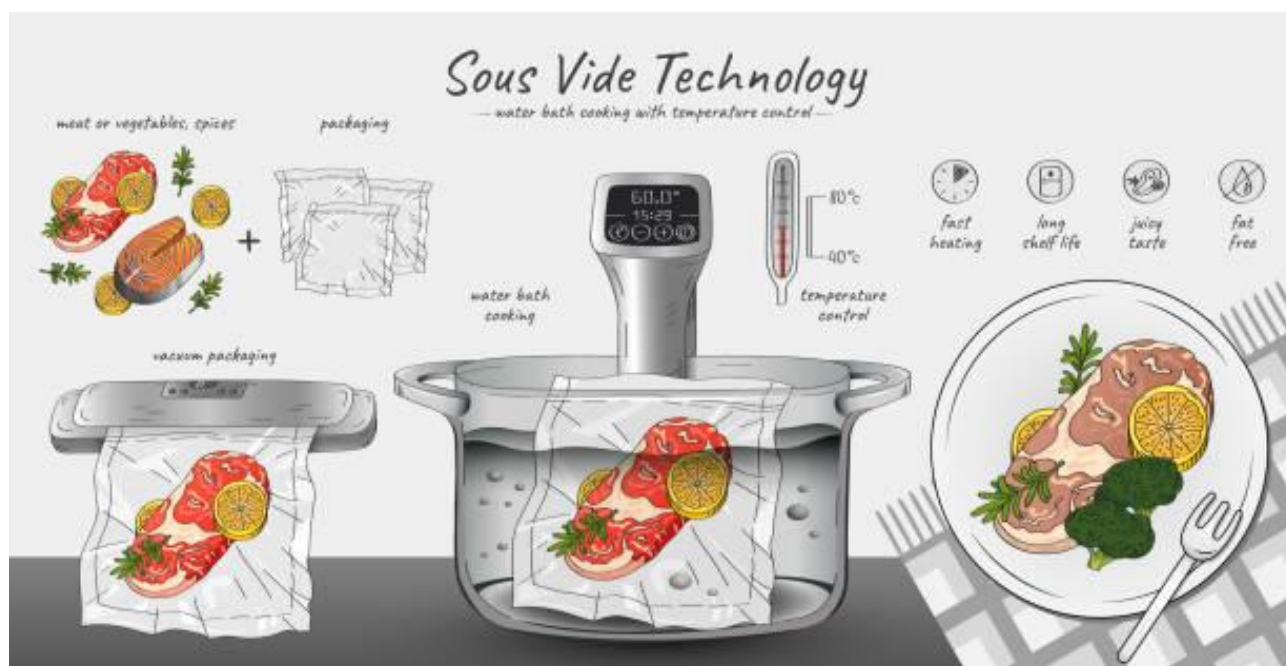


Sous Vide Fact Sheet

Sous vide is a food preparation process using vacuum sealed plastic bags to cook food within a water bath kept at a very consistent and precise temperature. The process may also include vacuum packing foods on site by utilizing appropriate equipment and food grade packaging.

Sous vide is becoming increasingly popular. It can be used cosmetically to retain vibrant colors of food products and change the texture of the food to something that would not be attainable through conventional means.



What is the Concern?

Sous vide cooking uses lower temperatures than conventional cooking. This temperature may not be high enough to deactivate all pathogens in food, and it will not destroy bacterial spores. The food pathogens of greatest concern are *Clostridium botulinum* and *Listeria monocytogenes*.

The use of multiple strategies to control pathogen growth can reduce the risk of foodborne illness from sous vide foods.

A food premises may process food using sous vide methods, provided proper controls are in place and staff are adequately trained. The food items must be carefully monitored to control for temperature, water activity and pH. As always, care must be taken to prevent cross-contamination, ensure proper food handling techniques and personal hygiene.

Process Requirements:

- All kitchen staff involved with sous vide processes should be Certified Food Handlers and should have specific training in sous vide. These staff should be aware of the “come up” time as well as cooking time. Come up time is the time it will take for food to reach a specific internal temperature after being immersed in the water bath.
- A written copy of all recipes utilizing sous vide techniques should be available at the request of the Public Health Inspector. Recipes will demonstrate evidence-based processes to ensure all hazardous foods are safe as per [O. Reg 493/17 section 26\(2\)](#).
- Thinner portions of food should be used so that heat transfer is rapid. Some foods may not be suitable for sous vide cooking, such as whole birds and minced meats.
- Vacuum pack foods in a single layer and avoid overlapping. Once opened, a package should not be re-sealed. Packages should be fully immersed in hot water bath and should not be able to float (this indicates too much air in package).
- No potentially hazardous food may be processed in water bath temperatures lower than 55°C. For chicken products, the lower limit is 60°C.
- All sous vide food that is not ready-to-eat or to be processed further, should be cooled using an ice water bath to below 3°C within two hours and should be reheated to above 60°C before serving. Reheated sous vide foods should be served immediately.
- All refrigerated sous vide products must be stored below 3°C until reheating.
- All sous vide pouched foods stored under refrigeration must be clearly labelled with date, time, discard date and identity.
- Raw sous vide foods should not be stored in the fridge for more than two days. Sous vide foods that are to be served immediately should be consumed within four hours.
- Fish prepared sous vide style should be frozen first for parasite control.
- Sous vide prepared foods should be stored up to a maximum of seven days.

Equipment Requirements:

- Food premises should only use commercial equipment that is designed for sous vide.
- All equipment used for sous vide should be cleaned and sanitized after every use. Follow cleaning instructions for all equipment, including immersion circulator. Hot water sanitation (77°C) recommended for circulator and water basin can be used.
- Pouches, bags, sacs, etc. used for sous vide must be food grade and designed for sous vide use. Glass jars are acceptable to use for foods that do not require a vacuum seal.
- The vacuum sealing machine must be able to package food to achieve an appropriate anaerobic environment.
- An immersion circulator or larger water bath system designed for sous vide should be used. It should never be overloaded which may increase the “come up” time. Once the cooking process has begun, additional sous vide items should not be placed into the hot water bath as this will lower the set temperature and items will not be properly cooked.
- An accurate probe thermometer is required to check internal temperatures as deemed necessary. The probe thermometer must be cleaned and sanitized between uses.
- Sealing tape designed for sous vide purposes should be utilized to ensure the puncture left by the probe thermometer properly re-seals. This will ensure that water does not seep into the pouch and/or creates an aerobic environment.

Additional Resources:

Public Health Ontario's [Case Study: Sous Vide](#)

BC Center for Disease Control's [Guidelines for Restaurant Sous Vide Cooking Safety](#)

For more information, contact your Public Health Inspector at Southwestern Public Health.