

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON DESCRIPTIVE DESIGNATION FOR NEEDLE-OR
BLADE – TENDERIZED (MECHANICALLY TENDERIZED) BEEF PRODUCTS
FSIS–2008–0017 docket, Final Rule, 9 CFR 317.2(e)(3)**

Validated Cooking Instructions

Q1: After the rule is effective, what must be included in the validated cooking instructions for mechanically tenderized beef?

A: The labels of raw and partially cooked needle- or blade-tenderized beef products destined for household consumers, hotels, restaurants, or similar institutions will have to bear validated cooking instructions, including:

- the cooking method;
- that these products need to be cooked to a specified minimum internal temperature;
- whether the product needs to be held for a specified time at that temperature or higher before consumption to ensure that potential pathogens are destroyed throughout the product; and
- a statement that the internal temperature should be measured by a thermometer (9 CFR 317.2(e)(3)(iii)).

These instructions should be practical and easily followed by consumers.

Establishments can meet these requirements by including the method (e.g., grilling or baking), the minimum internal temperature, and the applicable dwell time, without including specifics on the cooking time and temperature. For example, “Grill until product reaches 145F, as measured by a food thermometer, and hold the product at or above that temperature for 3 minutes” would meet the requirements of this rule.

Establishments may wish to include additional descriptive instructions that will make the labels more useful to consumers; however, FSIS will not require additional information on the product labels. To make the information more useful to consumers, establishments may wish to include the temperature setting of the cooking device, time to complete cooking, whether the product needs to be flipped during cooking, the amount of time to cook on each side exposed to the heat source, recommendations to thaw the product, if applicable, or recommendations to measure the temperature in thickest part of the product, etc.

As part of validation, establishments must have scientific support that demonstrates the cooking method provided in the instructions can repeatedly achieve the desired minimum internal temperature and time at that temperature. Validated cooking instructions that include such details as part of the cooking method are provided in Attachment 1 of the [FSIS Compliance Guideline for Validating Cooking Instructions for Mechanically Tenderized Beef Products](#).

In addition, the times and temperatures included in Attachment 2 of the guidance are also validated, so establishments do not have to do additional work to validate them. However, attachment 2 does not include information concerning the cooking method.

Q2: To meet requirements for validated cooking instructions on the labels of mechanically tenderized raw beef products, can producers use a grid or table format to display cooking times and temperatures based on product thickness? See the example below.

A: Yes. Below is an example of how a chart could be used on labels of mechanically tenderized product to meet these requirements.

Cook the following size steaks on a grill for the time indicated until the cooked steak reaches 145 as measured with a meat thermometer. Then allow the product to rest for 3 minutes.

Size (Thickness)	Cooking time
0.5"	1 ½ min, flip and cook for 1 ½ min
1.0"	1 ½ min, flip and cook for 2 min
1.5"	2 min, flip and cook for 2 min
2.0"	2 ½ min, flip and cook for 2 ½ min
2.5"	2 ½ min, flip and cook for 3 min
3.0"	3 min, flip and cook for 3 min
3.5"	3 min, flip and cook for 4 min

Q3: If a Federal establishment mechanically tenderizes a larger beef cut that is sold to hotels, restaurants, and institutions where it is fabricated into smaller cuts and cooked, how should the Federal establishment validate its cooking instructions to comply with 9 CFR 317.2(e)(3)(iii)?

A: The cooking instructions included on the label should be practical and easily followed by the customer. If possible, the Federal establishment should have knowledge of the types of cuts fabricated and cooked by the hotels, restaurants, and

institutions it supplies to and provide validated cooking instructions for those cuts. If an establishment does not have knowledge of the types of products its customers cook, then it may choose to include one of the validated cooking instructions provided in Attachment 1 of the [FSIS Compliance Guideline for Validating Cooking Instructions for Mechanically Tenderized Beef Products](#). on pages 17-21. The instructions have been provided for steaks of common thicknesses and therefore, represent cuts that would commonly be cooked by hotels, restaurants, and institutions.