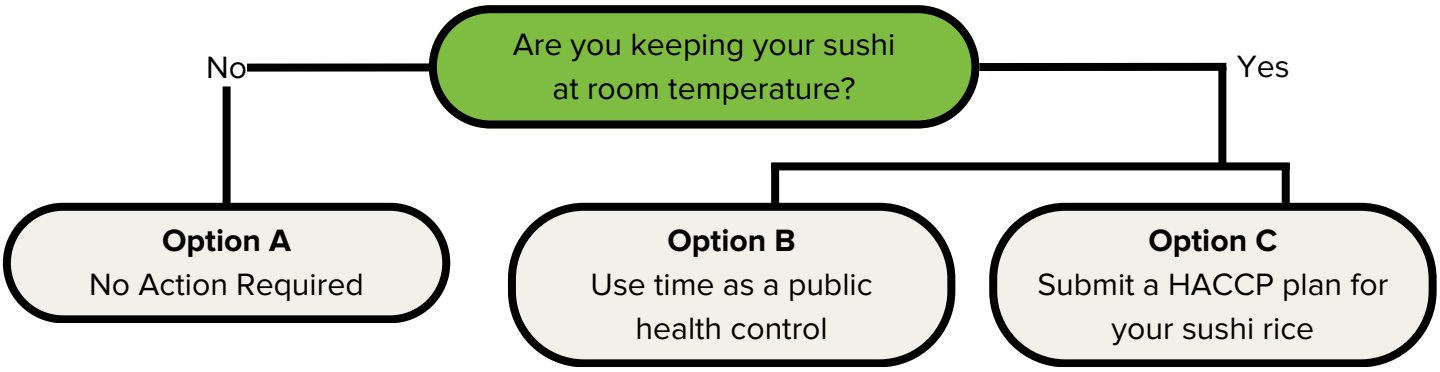
Sushi Rice for Food Establishments

The word “sushi” describes the specific preparation of the rice used in formed sushi-making. Sushi rice is a specific variety of rice that has its own unique flavor and ability to stick together to form finished products when combined with vinegar or other acidic products. In its conventional usage, sushi is described as cooked rice that has been acidified with vinegar solutions and formed with raw or cooked fish, other seafood, imitation crabmeat, shellfish and fish egg, surimi, fresh chopped vegetables, produce, pickles, tofu, etc.

Cooked rice is considered a time/temperature controlled for safety food. If not maintained at proper temperatures after being cooked, at or below 41°F or at 135°F or above, it can lead to illness.

When a food facility is making sushi rice, they must choose one of the following measures to be in compliance:

- Maintain sushi rice under temperature control
- Use “time only” control measures, time as a public health control
- Develop and maintain a Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan for food additives or components such as vinegar to render the sushi rice a non-time/temperature controlled for safety food.



Maintain Temperature Control

- Maintain cooked sushi rice at 41°F or below, or at 135°F or above

Time as a Public Health Control (TPHC)

Time can be used in place of temperature control or pH control to help ensure product safety. Utilizing TPHC cooked rice may be kept and served at room temperature for up to 4 hours without temperature control.

The following criteria must be met if you are choosing TPHC:

- A written procedure for time as a public health control must maintained at your facility and made available to review.
- The cooked rice container must be marked to indicate the time that cooked rice must be discarded if not used within 4 hours.
    - Examples include: stickers with a time, a timer or time logs.
- The cooked rice must be served or discarded within 4 hours from the point in time when the cooked rice is removed from temperature control. It may not be re-heated or refrigerated to be used after the 4-hour period.

Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point Plan (HACCP)

Acidification of time/temperature controlled for safety foods (TCS) with the intent of making them non-TCS is considered a special process in the Food Code. In the case of sushi rice, this process takes cooked rice and adds acid, typically vinegar, to drop the pH and allow the cooked rice to be held without time or temperature controls. Based on this process the facility must develop their own Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) Plan to control the hazards associated with a variance to operate outside the parameters of the Food Code.

The HACCP plan specifies the process and how food safety hazards will be controlled. The variance issued by the regulatory authority allows the establishment to implement a reviewed HACCP plan which controls food safety hazards in an alternate manner.

A HACCP plan must include:

- A flow diagram of the specific food identifying the Critical Control Points (CCPs) providing the following information:
  - Ingredients, equipment, and materials used in the preparation of that food
- Formulations that address the food safety concerns involved with sushi rice and the methods used to control safety hazards
- A trained designated food employee
- Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the plan identifying the following:
  - Critical Control Point (CCP) - Critical Limits (CLs) for each CCP
  - The method and frequency for monitoring CCP(s)
  - Corrective Action taken if CLs for each CCP are not met
  - The method and frequency for verifying the HACCP plan
  - Record keeping
- The following should be included in a sushi rice HACCP plan:
  - Operational steps including receiving, storage and preparation
  - A recipe/formulation including type of rice (e.g., short grain) and the concentration of the vinegar (e.g., 5%)
  - Methods for cooking rice including time and temperatures
  - Methods for preparing the vinegar mixture (e.g., vinegar, salt and sugar)
  - Method of cooling cooked rice indicating time and temperature
  - Method of mixing rice and vinegar solution
  - Identify the Critical Control Points (adding vinegar and cooling rice)
  - Identify your critical limits (target pH is ≤ 4.1 and must not reach critical limits >4.2)
  - Methods of measuring and the frequency of monitoring your Critical Control Points (e.g. measuring the pH daily by using a pH meter or pH test strips)
  - Describe your Corrective Action (e.g. if the pH is not less than 4.2, more vinegar will be added to the rice and retested, if pH test result is again not less than 4.2, the rice will be discarded)
  - Policy and procedures regarding the storage of sushi rice should indicate holding time and temperature (e.g. 12 hours at 70°F - 80°F)
  - Describe policy regarding remaining sushi rice following the holding time (e.g. discard leftover sushi rice after 12 hours)
  - Describe policy regarding recordkeeping

Addition of vinegar for flavor only, when pH is not monitored, is not considered a special process and rice must be temperature controlled just like any other TCS food. It is also important to remember that once the acidified rice is combined with other sushi ingredients the final product would be considered TCS again requiring time and temperature control.