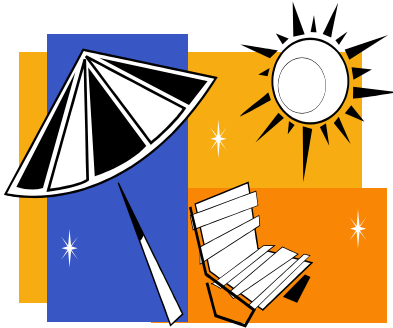


SUMMER FOOD HANDLING



In the summertime, foods can quickly reach the "Danger Zone", temperatures between 40°F and 140°F where bacteria multiply quickly. During the summer heat is more important than ever to be sure foods are handled properly. The refrigerator should be set to maintain 40°F or slightly lower and the freezer for zero degrees.

When shopping for raw and cooked foods in the summertime, be sure the store is displaying food at the proper temperature. Display cases have thermometers indicating the temperature of the cooler. Never choose packages that are warm, torn or leaking.

Put raw meat and poultry into a plastic bag so meat juices will not cross contaminate cooked foods, vegetables or fruit.

When ordering food from the deli department, be sure the clerk observes good sanitary practices. Don't buy cooked items touching raw items in the display case.

Put refrigerated or frozen items in the shopping cart immediately before heading for the checkout counter. Ask the "bagger" to put raw foods in bags separate from cooked foods and produce. When loading the car, keep perishable items inside the air-conditioned car - not in the trunk. Drive immediately home from the grocery store. If you live farther away than 30 minutes, bring a cooler with ice from home and place perishables in the cooler.

Unload perishable foods from the car first and immediately refrigerate or freeze them. Assuming the store wrap on meat and poultry is clean and not torn. It is best to leave a product in its original packaging to keep from introducing bacteria. For long-term freezer storage (longer than 2 to 3 months), over-wrap store packaging with clean plastic or aluminum foil for added protection from freezer burn.

Wash hands before and after handling raw meat and poultry. Handle perishable food quickly. When refrigerating or freezing do not stack foods -- the cold air needs to reach the center to chill them fast.

Be sure all work surfaces and utensils are clean before preparing food. Remember, bacteria can be present on any surface, food and people's hands. To sanitize cutting boards, counters and sinks, first wash with hot soapy water. Make a solution of one teaspoon of chlorine bleach to a quart of water and let the solution set on surfaces for a few minutes. Then rinse with clear water and pat dry.

Marinate meat and poultry in a covered dish in the refrigerator. When picnicking or cooking outdoors, take plenty of clean utensils. Never put cooked food on a platter that contained raw meat or poultry. Pack clean, soapy sponges, cloths and wet towelettes for cleaning surfaces and hands.

Thoroughly cook meats and poultry. Keep hot food hot and cold foods cold! Divide leftovers into small shallow containers to help foods cool quickly. Put food directly in the refrigerator or freezer. Never refrigerate on large pot of food or a whole turkey.

More information on food safety and handling is available from the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline 1-800-535-4555.

SIX SUMMERTIME FOOD SAFETY RULES

1. Keep food cold. This is the best way to fight bacteria. Keep the refrigerator set to maintain 40°F or slightly lower.

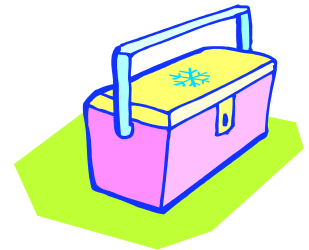
2. Keep bacteria on your hands out of the food. Everyone should wash their hands before handling food.

3. Don't spread bacteria from raw meat and poultry to other foods. Wash hands after contact with raw meat and poultry. Use fresh utensils on each food. Use separate cutting boards for and cooked foods. Do not store raw foods above cooked foods. Do not store raw foods in the same container with cooked foods.

4. Thoroughly cook raw meat, poultry and fish.

5. Don't use food from damaged containers. Check cans and glass jars for dents, cracks, leaks, or bulging lids: paper or plastic packages for leaks, stains or tears.

6. Take "summer stock" of your appliances. Check that your refrigerator registers a safe 40°F or lower. Freezers and freezing compartments should be set at 0°F or lower.



"C'MON, LET'S HAVE A PICNIC"

When the weather is nice outdoors it makes people think "picnic" and you could find yourself organizing one. Never fear. Find the picnic hamper and the cooler. Then, thumb through these food care hints before you head to the store.

1. Buy perishable products last at the store and get them home to the refrigerator, or into the portable ice-chest or insulated bag you're taking

on the picnic. Never leave perishables in a hot car while you run errands.

2. For quick use, perishable products can be kept in the refrigerator for a few days. If the store wrap on meat and poultry is clean and not torn, leave it on. Otherwise, re-wrap products in clean plastic or aluminum foil. Make sure the refrigerator is cooling food to 40°F or lower.

3. For longer storage, freeze food. Wrap items tightly in heavy foil or freezer bags. Mayonnaise-based meat, poultry and fish salads do not freeze well. Nor do tomatoes and lettuce.

4. Thaw foods in the refrigerator one or two nights before you need it. Allow plenty of time for larger cuts to thaw. Small cuts will usually thaw in the refrigerator overnight. But if the meat is still partially frozen when you're ready to leave, no problem. Just cook it a bit longer at the picnic. Cook everything thoroughly. If you like your steak rare or medium rare, just remember that there is a chance that some food poisoning organisms can survive such short cooking times.

5. Take what you know about kitchen cleanliness to the grill. If there is no water faucet available, use disposable, wet hand-wipes to clean your hands before working with food. And take up cooked meat and poultry with clean utensils onto a fresh plate for serving. Don't re-use utensils, plates, or bowls you used with raw products - for either the cooked meat or the other food.

6. Keep cold food items in the cooler. For a worry-free picnic keep your perishable foods in a cooler as much as possible. While all mayonnaise-based salads should be kept on ice, the mayonnaise you buy at the store is not a food poisoning villain. Its high acid content actually slows bacterial growth. But home-made mayonnaise, if made without lemon juice or vinegar, can be risky. The cooler should be well insulated and packed with ice or you can use a freezer pack insert. Cold drinks in cans help keep other food cool too. When possible keep the cooler in the shade. Keep the lid closed.

7. Put perishable foods back in the cooler as soon as you finish eating. Don't leave them out while you go for a swim or hike. When possible, put the chest in the passenger area of the car for the trip home. It's cooler than in the trunk. If you were gone no more than 4 or 5 hours, and your perishables were on ice except when cooked or served, you should be able to save the leftovers.

