

Summertime Food Safety



The number of people who get sick from food poisoning goes up in the summer. Be sure you and your family aren't among them. During summertime, bacteria flourish. Heat, humidity and often the lack of a sanitized environment all contribute to food borne illness. So it's more important than ever to be careful when preparing and cooking foods. Although the same food safety rules apply, extra precautions are necessary during the summer to prevent food borne illness.

Clean – Wash hands, utensils and surfaces with hot soapy water before and after food preparation, and especially after preparing meat, poultry, eggs or seafood. Thoroughly wash fresh fruits and vegetables if they are to be consumed raw.

Separate – Keep raw meat, poultry, eggs and seafood and their juices away from ready-to-eat foods; never place cooked food on an unwashed plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, eggs or seafood.

Cook – Cook food to the proper internal temperature and check for doneness with a food thermometer. Ground beef should be cooked to an internal temperature of 160° F and until the interior is brown and poultry should be cooked to an internal temperature of 165°F. Cook eggs until both the yolk and white are firm.

Chill – Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared food and leftovers within two hours and make sure the refrigerator is set at 40° F or lower and the freezer is set at 0° F. When using a cooler to store your food make sure that it is packed with several inches of ice, ice packs or containers of frozen water.

Here are some additional tips to keep food safe when warm weather arrives and the kitchen moves outdoors.

- If no water faucet is available, use disposable hand wipes, or waterless hand cleaners. That way you can clean your hands before working with food or when you go from one type of food preparation to another.
- To keep bacteria from spreading, wash your hands again after working with raw meat or poultry before handling other food, especially food that will not be cooked or heated. When you switch from cutting up raw meat or poultry to cutting up salad ingredients or vegetables, either wash the cutting board and utensils in hot, soapy water or use a different cutting board and utensils.
- If you are using the picnic table for food preparation, be careful not to contaminate the surface with discarded marinades or fluids from uncooked meats, eggs, poultry or seafood by covering the table or disinfecting it before dining.
- If you are going to marinate meat and plan to use part of the marinade as a sauce or dip, reserve some for that purpose before adding the raw meat. Discard the used marinade after the meat has been marinated.
- No matter how convenient it seems, do not partially cook food the day before to finish cooking at your picnic site. If food is not fully cooked, the internal temperature will not

reach a point high enough to kill off harmful bacteria. To save time, consider cooking your food completely the day before, then reheating it to an internal temperature of 165° F at your destination.

- The grill should be very hot before putting meat on it. Coals are ready when they have a light coating of gray ash on them. After removing your cooked meat to a clean plate or platter, leave the grill rack in place so the fire will burn off any food residue. When grilling at a public place, be sure to clean all cooking surfaces thoroughly before use. Thoroughly clean your grilling utensils when they become soiled and take steps to ensure that they are protected from flies, dust and dirt.
- After the meat is cooked, use clean utensils to place it on a fresh plate for serving. Don't re-use any of the utensils, plates or bowls that were used during the preparation of raw meat. Bacteria live in the juices of raw meat and you can contaminate safely cooked meat by putting it back on the same platter that had held the meat when it was raw.
- Put perishable foods back in the cooler or refrigerator as soon as you finish eating. Don't leave them out while you go for a swim or a hike, and don't leave them out all afternoon to nibble on. Follow the two-hour rule: don't leave perishable food unrefrigerated for more than two hours. In hot weather, you may want to reduce that time to one hour. Keep the ice chest closed and out of the sun. If you traveled away from home, put the ice chest in the passenger area of the car during your trip to and from your destination. It's much cooler than the trunk.