

KEEP FOOD SAFE

WHEN PREPARING AND SERVING

Proper food preparation is the last defense in having safe food. The way food is handled during serving is also important. Protect yourself during preparation and serving by:

- Keeping food hot.
- Keeping food cold.
- Keeping food clean.

If you are serving food to make money, you need a permit from Public Health. Contact someone from your local Public Health unit well before the event. They are very willing to work with you to make sure the way you are handling and serving food is safe.

■ **KEEP FOOD CLEAN**

The first step is to wash your hands with soap and hot, running water before beginning food preparation. Also, wash your hands each time after handling raw meat, poultry, or fish; touching animals; or using the bathroom.

Keep countertops, equipment, and utensils clean. Bacteria can live on minute amounts of food so thorough washing after each use is important. Take equipment apart to clean it. Several years ago, a foodborne outbreak occurred in a Delaware nursing home because a blender had not been cleaned adequately around the blade.

Use clean aprons, dishcloths, and towels. These items are perfect for bacteria to loiter! Remember, it takes only a small amount of food to feed bacteria!

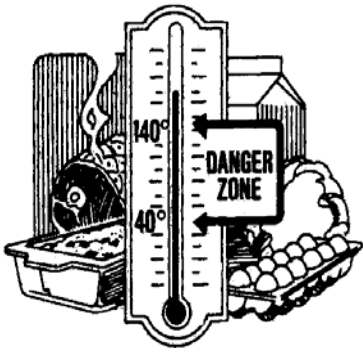
As you prepare food, don't let juices from raw meat or poultry come in contact with other foods, raw or cooked. Thoroughly wash cutting boards between each use, even when preparing the same meal. Serve



Wash hands and utensils often.

cooked foods on clean plates, using clean utensils. For instance, never put barbecued chicken back on the platter that held raw chicken.

■ KEEP FOOD COLD



Keep hot foods hot
and cold foods cold.

Thaw foods only in the refrigerator, or under cold water changed every 30 minutes, or in the microwave oven followed by immediate cooking. Of course, frozen foods can be cooked from the frozen state unless you are using smokers or slow-cookers.

Stuff meats just before cooking. Although they are convenient, avoid buying fresh, prestuffed meat items.

Marinate raw products in the refrigerator, not on the counter, even if your recipes call for marinating at room temperature. Do not reuse marinades. To serve marinade on the side, prepare extra that is not used on the raw product.

If entertaining buffet style, keep cold food on ice, or use small serving dishes and replenish from the refrigerator.

After meals, promptly refrigerate or freeze foods. Don't let food sit on the table or counter. Although in the past leaving food out until the next meal was common, we now know that pathogens can multiply. Then, if we eat this food, we can become ill.

If you cook a large batch of food, placing it immediately into the refrigerator or freezer will not cause the food to sour or spoil. In fact, keeping it at room temperature invites disaster. The internal temperature of the food should reach 40°F within 4 hours. Divide large pieces of food or place in small, shallow containers for refrigerating or freezing. To cool rapidly items such as soup, stew, and even pudding, place pot in cold ice water. Stirring occasionally further speeds cooling.

Date packages of leftovers and use within a safe period.

■ KEEP FOOD HOT

Cooking destroys most pathogens. Use a meat thermometer to judge safe internal temperature of meat or poultry.

In slow-cooking devices such as crock pots, use only thawed food, cook chunks rather than roasts or large cuts, and include a liquid. Check internal temperature in at least three spots to be sure food reaches a safe internal temperature.

Microwaving can be a big time- and energy-saver. But exercise care when cooking foods. Because microwaves tend to heat unevenly, undercooked areas can be a problem. Some ways to minimize uneven cooking include:

- Cover products – especially raw meat, poultry, fish, or shellfish.
- Rotate food during cooking unless you use a rotating tray or microwave pad.
- Let microwaved foods stand for the recommended time before serving.
- Check the temperature of microwaved foods in at least three places (use temperature probe if your microwave oven has one).
- Examine the food visually for undercooked areas.

Cook meat, poultry, seafood, or fish in oven temperature of 325°F or greater. Avoid “cooking without a heat source.” For example, don’t preheat the oven, place food in oven, and then turn off the oven to allow food to complete the cooking process.

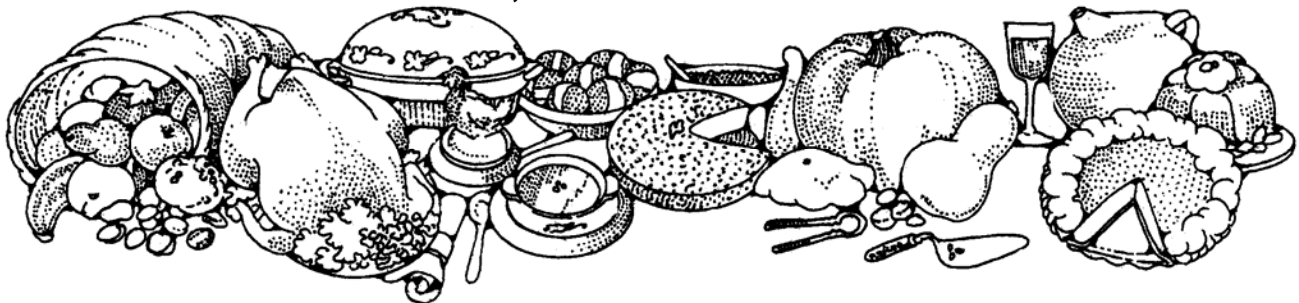
No matter what method you choose to cook food, don’t interrupt cooking. To save time and human energy, it may be tempting to cook a product partially and finish it at a later time on the grill or in the oven. But this method can be dangerous. You may be permitting harmful bacteria to multiply. Some of these bacteria may produce toxins that are not destroyed completely when the food is reheated.

Temperature of hot foods should be maintained at 140°F or above. Keep food hot in the oven or reheat small servings from the refrigerator.

Don’t taste leftovers to determine safety. Cover leftovers and reheat thoroughly before serving (rolling boil for sauces, soups, gravies, and other liquid foods; 165°F for all others).

Throw out any perishable food that has been left at room temperature for more than two hours. When the temperature reaches 90°F or above, hold cooked foods no longer than one hour before reheating, refrigerating, or freezing.

The health and economic consequences of eating tainted food is much greater than the investment in the food. **If in doubt, throw it out.**



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