

# Safety Tips for Handling and Preparing: Meats and Poultry



## Meat and Poultry Safety at Home

### **Plan to be safe.**

Food poisoning peaks in the summer months when warmer temperatures cause foodborne germs to flourish. There are lots of ways to prevent food poisoning and you can begin before you even purchase the food. When planning a cookout, check foods on the recall list. When you go shopping buy meat and poultry last (right before you checkout.) Separate raw meat and poultry from other food in your shopping cart. To guard against cross-contamination, put packages of raw meat and poultry into individual plastic bags.

### **Keep it clean. Stop the germs.**

Dirty hands and prep surfaces can carry germs. Wash your hands, kitchen work surfaces and utensils with soap and water immediately after they have been in contact with raw meat or poultry. Also, fill a spray bottle with water and one tablespoon of bleach to keep handy to wipe off surfaces and utensils.

### **Groom your grill and tools.**

Wire bristles from grill cleaning brushes may dislodge and stick into food on the grill. The best method to clean a grill is to use a moist cloth or paper towel to clean the grill before cooking. If you do use a wire bristle brush, thoroughly inspect the grill's surface before cooking.

### **Curb co-mingling.**

Raw meat juices can spread germs to cooked food. To curb co-mingling, place cooked meats on a clean plate and discard marinades and sauces that have come in contact with raw meat juices.

### **Check to be sure.**

Meat and poultry may brown quickly when grilled and appear done, even when they aren't. Use a meat thermometer to ensure grilled and smoked meats have reached the recommended internal temperatures to kill harmful germs.



## Temperature Guidelines for Meat and Poultry

### Grilling:

- Whole cuts of beef, pork, lamb and veal: 145° F  
(stand-time of 3 minutes at this temperature)
- Fish: 145° F
- Hamburgers & other ground beef: 160° F
- All poultry and precooked meats, like hot dogs: 165° F

### Smoking:

250° F – 300° F Inside smoker

### After Grilling:

140° F or warmer until it's served

## Treat leftovers right.

- Keep leftovers in an insulated (40° F or below) cooler while transporting.
- Refrigerate leftover meat and poultry within two hours of cooking or one hour if above 90° F.
- Frozen leftovers should keep for about four months.
- Divide leftovers into smaller portions. Refrigerate or freeze in covered shallow containers for faster cooling.
- Reheat cooked leftovers to 165° F using a food thermometer.

## Common Mistakes

### #1 Putting cooked food back on a plate that held raw meat.

Foodborne pathogens from raw meat can easily spread to cooked and cause food poisoning, yet 24 percent of Americans report not properly separating these foods.

### #2 Thawing food on the counter.

Never thaw food on the counter. Harmful foodborne pathogens multiply rapidly when foods are in the danger zone—between 40° F and 140° F.

### #3 Washing meat or poultry.

Never wash meat or poultry because the water can easily spread bacteria to your sink, countertops and other kitchen surfaces.

### #4 Letting food cool before putting it in the refrigerator.

Don't leave food out of the refrigerator for more than two hours or one hour if it's more than 90° outside.

### #5 Undercooking meat, poultry, seafood or eggs.

Cooked food is safe only after it's been heated to a high enough internal temperature to kill harmful bacteria. The only way to determine if food is cooked and safe to eat is to use a food thermometer.

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