



KEYS TO BETTER HEALTH™



Keeping Foods Safe This Holiday Season

Throughout the holiday season, chances are that you will be cooking food for family gatherings, pot lucks or a party. During these events, the food you make may be sitting out for longer periods of time. Safe food handling is very important to keep guests healthy and prevent foodborne illness. The USDA Department of Agriculture recommends using the following “Core Four” tips for food safety: Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill,¹ when preparing and storing food. Implement these practices to keep you and your guests safe during the holiday season.



CLEAN: Wash Hands and Surfaces Often

- Before getting started cooking, be sure to wash your hands using warm water and soap, for 20 seconds.
- Don't forget to include washing your cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and counter tops with hot, soapy water after preparing each food item.

SEPARATE: Don't Cross Contaminate

- Bacteria can spread from cross-contamination. Harmful bacteria from raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs can spread to other foods if they aren't separated properly.²
- When purchasing raw meat, poultry, fish, and eggs, be sure to separate these items from the other food in your shopping cart. Place these foods in separate plastic bags to prevent juices from getting on the other foods.³ When you arrive home, separate the raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs from other foods in the refrigerator, placing them in sealed bags or containers on the bottom shelf.

COOK: Cook to Proper Temperatures

- Use a food thermometer when cooking meat, poultry,

and egg dishes to ensure that food is cooked to a safe internal temperature. Each food is required to reach an internal temperature hot enough to kill harmful bacteria that can cause foodborne illness. For whole beef and pork, cook to an internal temperature of 145 degrees, for poultry cook to 165 degrees.

- Bring sauces, gravies, and soups to a boil when reheating them, and heat other leftovers to a minimum of 165 degrees.
- When cooking foods in a microwave oven, make sure there are not cold spots in foods like casseroles. Cover the food, rotate, and stir periodically to ensure even cooking.

CHILL: Refrigerate Promptly

- Refrigerate your foods as quickly as possible when you arrive home from the store. Do not over-fill your refrigerator or freezer, and make sure that your refrigerator temperature is set at 40 degrees or lower and set the freezer temperature to 0 degrees or below.
- When defrosting food, always keep foods at safe temperatures by defrosting in the refrigerator, in cold water, or in the microwave.
- Refrigerate foods such as raw meat, raw poultry, raw eggs, cooked foods, or cut fresh fruits or vegetables as soon as possible. It is recommended food be refrigerated within two hours after cooking.

Sources:

1. Food Safety. Choose My Plate website. <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-safety> Accessed June 18, 2018.
2. The Core Four Practices. <http://www.fightbac.org/food-safety-basics/the-core-four-practices/>. Accessed June 18, 2018
3. Get it Straight, Its Safer to Separate. Fight Bac website. http://www.fightbac.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/PFSE-7696-Fact-Sheets-Separate_FINAL.pdf. Accessed June 18, 2018.

Keys To Better Health™ offers a nutrition shelf-edge labeling program, which makes it easy for you to quickly identify healthy choices regardless of what diet you follow. When you're in our store, be on the lookout for our nutrition tags!

