Be a safe “Food Handler” - The Four Basic Rules

1. Clean: Wash hands and surfaces often including cutting boards, utensils, counter tops, and food. Wash hands in warm soapy water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food and using the bathroom, changing diapers, or handling pets.

2. Separate: Cross-contamination occurs when bacteria are spread from one food product to another, especially when handling raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs. Keep these foods, and their juices, away from ready-to-eat foods.

3. Cook to safe temperatures: Foods are safely cooked when they are heated to the recommended safe minimum internal temperatures as shown on the “Danger Zone” chart.

4. Refrigerate or freeze meat, poultry, eggs, seafood, and other perishables within 2 hours of cooking or purchasing. Refrigerate within 1 hour if the temperature outside is above 90 °F.

Be a “Food Safe” Shopper:

♦ Carefully read food labels while in the store to make sure food is not past its “sell by” date.
♦ Put raw packaged meat, poultry, or seafood into a plastic bag before placing it in the shopping cart so that its juices will not drip on – and contaminate – other foods.
♦ Buy only pasteurized milk, fruit juices, cheese, and other dairy products from the refrigerated section.
♦ Purchase eggs in the shell from the refrigerated section of the store. For recipes that call for eggs that are raw or undercooked when the dish is served, use either shell eggs that have been treated to destroy Salmonella by pasteurization or pasteurized egg products.
♦ Never buy food that is displayed in unsafe or unclean conditions.
♦ When purchasing canned goods, make sure that they are free of dents, cracks, or bulging lids. (Once you are home, remember to clean each lid before opening the can.)

Attention Senior Citizens:

Have a nutritional question or concern? If you are participating in services offered by Schenectady County’s Senior and Long Term Care services, you are eligible to have a free consultation with a Registered Dietitian. Call Cornell Cooperative Extension, Schenectady County at 372-1622, ext. 269. Leave a message, if necessary, for dietitian to call you back.
“Danger Zone” (40° to 140°)

Leaving food out too long at room temperature can cause bacteria to grow to dangerous levels that can cause illness. Bacteria grow most rapidly at temperatures between 40° and 140° Fahrenheit, doubling in number every 20 minutes. This range of temperatures is often called the “Danger Zone.”

Keep Food Out of the “Danger Zone”

Never leave food out of refrigeration over two hours. If the temperature is above 90°, food should not be left out more than one hour.
- Keep hot food hot — at or above 140°. Place cooked food in a chafing dish, a warming tray, a warm oven (170°) or toaster oven, or a slow cooker.
- Keep cold food cold — at or below 40°. Place food in the refrigerator or cover with ice or ice packs in a container or cooler.

Cooking

Raw meat, fish, eggs, and poultry should always be cooked to a safe minimum internal temperature (see “Danger Zone” chart). When roasting meat and poultry, the oven should be above 325°.

Always clean your probe thermometer with soap and water before and after you use it!

Storing Leftovers

One of the most common causes of foodborne illness is improper cooling of cooked foods. Bacteria can be get into food after it is safely cooked. For this reason leftovers should be in pieces no thicker than two inches for quick cooling and refrigerated within two hours.

Reheating

Foods should be reheated thoroughly to a temperature of 165° or until hot and steaming. In the microwave oven, cover the food and rotate it (if it doesn’t do it automatically) so it heats up evenly.

For answers to questions concerning food and cooking, you can call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline toll free at: 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854). The Hotline is open year-round Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. ET (English or Spanish). Recorded food safety messages are available 24 hours a day. Also check out the Food Safety Government website at www.foodsafety.gov for more information.

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