

# FACT SHEET: Simple Summer Food Safety Tips



## **Tip #1: Keep foods at the right temperature**

- *Keep your foods out of the danger zone.* In warm temperatures, it may only take an hour for food to enter the Danger Zone — the unsafe temperatures between 40° F and 140° F. When removing food from the refrigerator, either promptly cook it or place it back in the refrigerator or cooler to ensure freshness, quality and safety.
- *Keep an instant-read thermometer handy.* Check the temperature of your burgers or steaks by placing an instant-read thermometer horizontally into the side of the meat and inserting all the way to the center.
- *Remember, the proper internal temperature is 160° F for ground beef and 145° F for steaks and beef roasts.* Not only will the correct temperature keep your food safe, but properly cooked food tastes better than over- or under-cooked food.
- *Don't defrost your meat at room temperature.* The safest way to defrost your meat is to place it in the refrigerator on a tray to catch any juices. If you are short on time, use your microwave. Use the defrost setting if your microwave has one, otherwise monitor closely to avoid cooking the meat before it is totally thawed. When defrosting food in the microwave, plan to cook it immediately.

## **Tip #2: Avoid cross-contamination**

- *Keep your hands clean.* Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and hot water for 20 seconds after handling uncooked meat to prevent spreading bacteria.
- *Keep kitchen surfaces clean.* Use paper towels and hot, soapy water to wipe up meat and poultry juices from countertops and carefully clean all surfaces, plates, utensils, etc. that have come in contact with uncooked meat or poultry.
- *Wash cloth hand towels and dish rags in the hot cycle of your washing machine frequently.* Without regular washing, cloth hand towels and dish rags can be a breeding ground for bacteria which can then spread to clean surfaces.

## **Tip #3: Food safety is important for grilling, too!**

- *Use medium heat when cooking on the grill.* High heat can overcook or char the outside of beef cuts while the interior remains underdone.
  - Check cooking temperature by cautiously holding the palm of your hand above the coals at cooking height. Count the number of seconds you can hold your hand in that position before the heat forces you to pull it away; approximately 4 seconds for medium heat.
- *Clean outdoor cooking and eating areas.* Keep paper towels and a bucket of hot, soapy water outside to clean up your outdoor eating and cooking areas.
- *Be careful when you're moving from the kitchen to the grill.* Be particularly mindful of cross-contamination when cooking outdoors; be sure to wash your hands whenever you're handling food, especially after petting the dog or touching the screen door.
- *Take a clean plate with you to the grill for your cooked food.* Never use the same plate for raw and cooked meat.

## **Tip #4: Clean out your refrigerator and freezer**

- *Dispose of items in your refrigerator that are past the "Use By" date on the package.* "Use by" dates indicate the last recommended date for use of the product. Other dates can also appear on packaging. "Sell by" dates tell retailers how long to display a product, and "best if used by" dates indicate the last date for best flavor and quality.
- *Avoid the danger of cross-contamination in the refrigerator.* Store raw meat, poultry and seafood in containers or sealed plastic bags on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator to prevent their juices from dripping onto other foods.
- *Take stock of your frozen foods.* Any type of frozen food stored constantly at 0° F will be safe. Recommended storage times are for quality – taste and texture – only. Label and date your frozen food items so they are easy to remember.

Frozen Meat Storage Guide	
Type of Meat	# of Months
Meat, uncooked roasts	6 – 12
Meat, uncooked steaks or	6 – 12
Meat, uncooked ground	3 – 4
Meat, cooked	2 – 3
Poultry, uncooked whole	12
Poultry, uncooked parts	9
Poultry, cooked	4

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