



Food Safety Tips and Guidelines

Food Handling and Preparation - Starting Clean

- Wash hands and work surfaces such as counter tops and cutting boards before starting food preparation.
- Wash hands, work surfaces and utensils after handling raw meat or poultry.
- Never use the same utensils or platters from raw meat or poultry with another food before washing it.
- When thawing foods, use the refrigerator for slow safe thawing, the microwave if the food will be cooked immediately, or sealed packages can be thawed in a cold water bath.
- Always marinate food in the refrigerator. Don't reuse the marinade from raw meats or poultry unless it has been boiled.
- Wash fresh fruits and vegetables thoroughly to remove dirt and residues, even if they are to be peeled.

Food Storage - Keeping It Safe

- Cooked foods should be cooled rapidly to prevent bacteria growth.
- Place cooked food in the refrigerator or freezer while still hot. It's not safe to cool it on the counter.
- Place foods in shallow containers to speed the cooling process about 3 inches deep or less. Never refrigerate one large pot of food or a whole turkey. Cover foods after they are cool.
- Foods are in the "danger zone" if the temperatures are between 40-140 degrees Fahrenheit. Cold foods should be kept below 40 degrees and hot foods above 140 degrees to prevent bacterial growth.
- Discard any leftovers that have been left out for more than two hours.

For questions on food safety, call USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-800-535-4555.