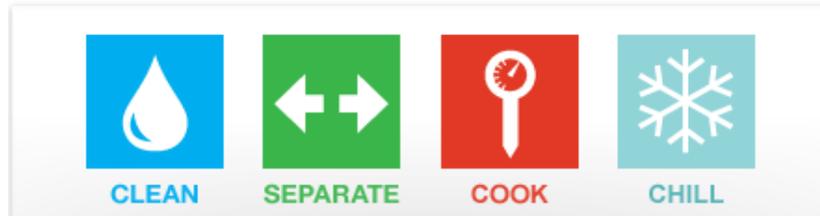

Food Safety: Four Steps to Check

Four Steps to Check: Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill



Step 1: Clean hands, surfaces, utensils and fruits or vegetables

Wash your hands often:

- Wash your hands before, during, and after preparing food, and before eating food.
- Wash your hands any time they could be dirty.

Hand washing instructions:

- Wet your hands with warm or cold running water and apply soap.
- Rub your hands together to make a lather and scrub them well. Be sure to scrub the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
- Continue rubbing hands for at least 20 seconds.
 - Singing the entire “Happy Birthday” song twice is equal to 20 seconds if you don’t have a timer.
- Rinse your hands well under running water.
- Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry.

Wash surfaces and utensils after each use:

- Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and counter tops with hot, soapy water after and between preparing each different food item.

Wash fruits and veggies:

- Cut away damaged or bruised areas, then rinse produce under running water.
- Scrub produce with a produce brush if needed to remove all dirt.
- Dry produce with a clean paper or cloth towel.
- Meat, poultry and eggs do not need to be washed.

Step 2: Separate to avoid cross-contamination:

Avoid cross-contamination during cooking:

- Use a different cutting board and plate for produce than you use for meat, poultry, seafood or eggs.
- Wash all plates, utensils, and cutting boards that held raw meat, poultry, seafood, or eggs fully after use.

Avoid cross-contamination during grocery shopping:

- Separate raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs from other foods in your shopping cart.
- Place raw meat, poultry, and seafood in plastic bags to contain the juices.

Avoid cross-contamination during food storage:

- Keep meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs separate from all other foods in the fridge.
- Place raw meat, poultry and seafood in containers or sealed bags.
- Consider storing raw meat, poultry and seafood on a fridge shelf below where produce is stored so it does not drip onto the produce.
- Freeze meats if you're not planning to use them within a few days.

Step 3: Cook to a safe temperature

Avoid the “danger zone:”

- The bacteria that cause food poisoning multiply quickest between 40° and 140° Fahrenheit. This temperature range is called the danger zone.
- Color and texture can't tell you if a food is at the correct temperature. Use a food thermometer to make sure your food is done and has cooked to a safe temperature.
- Table 1 *Safe Cooking Temperatures* included below is a guide for what temperatures to cook different foods to.

Keep hot food hot:

- After it is cooked keep food at 140° Fahrenheit or above.
- Use a heat source like a chafing dish, warming tray, or slow cooker to keep food warm or eat food immediately after cooking.

Cooking in your microwave safely:

- Stop microwave and stir foods halfway through heating.
- After heating, let the food stand for 1-2 minutes to allow it to continue to cook.
- Use a food thermometer to make sure food is 165° F or warmer.

Step 4: Chill food in the refrigerator quickly and thaw safely:

Refrigerate perishable foods within two hours:

- Your fridge should be between 40 °F and 32 °F
- Your freezer should be 0 °F or below
- Use shallow containers to help leftovers chill faster.
- Make sure to throw leftovers and food away before it spoils or grows harmful bacteria. Table 2 *Safe Storage Times* included below is a reference for how long perishable food can keep before it should be thrown out.

Thaw foods safely to avoid growth of harmful bacteria:

- Never thaw or marinate foods on the counter.
- Thaw or marinate foods in the refrigerator if you can. Place the food on a plate or in a container to prevent any juices from leaking.

- To thaw food faster, you can put the frozen package in a watertight plastic bag and submerge it in cold water. Change the water every 30 minutes.
- Follow instructions in your owner’s manual to safely thaw foods in the microwave.
- It is safe to cook food frozen without thawing but it may take longer.

Table 1: Safe Cooking Temperatures

Category	Food	Minimum Temperature	Rest Time
Meat (Beef, Pork, Veal, Lamb)	Steaks, chops, and roasts	145° F	At least 3 minutes
	Ground Meat	160° F	None
	Ham, fresh or uncooked	145° F	At least 3 minutes
	Ham, fully cooked (to reheat)	140° F if packaged in a USDA-inspected facility	None
Poultry	All Poultry (breasts, whole bird, legs, thighs, wings, giblets, stuffing)	165° F	None
	Ground Poultry	165° F	None
Eggs & Egg Dishes	Eggs	160° F and yolk and white are firm	None
	Egg Dishes	160° F	None
Fish and Shellfish	Fish	145° F	None
	Shellfish	145° F	None
Leftovers & Casseroles	Leftovers	165° F	None
	Casseroles	165° F	None

Table 2: Storage Times for the Refrigerator and Freezer

If there is an expiration date listed on the package you can go by that date. If there is not a date listed this provides a suggested storage time for meats, poultry and eggs.

Category	Food	Refrigerator (40° F or below)	Freezer
Salads	egg, chicken, ham, tuna & macaroni salads	3 -5 days	Does not freeze well
Hotdogs	unopened package	1 week	1-2 months
	opened package	2 weeks	1-2 months
Luncheon meat	opened package or deli sliced	3 -5 days	1-2 months
	unopened package	2 weeks	1-2 months
Bacon	bacon	7 days	1 month
Sausage	sausage, raw – from chicken, turkey, pork, beef	1-2 days	1-2 months
Hamburger & Other Ground Meats	hamburger, ground beef, turkey, veal, pork, lamb, & mixtures of them	1-2 days	3-4 months
Fresh Beef, Veal, Lamb & Pork	steaks, chops, roasts	3-5 days	4-12 months
Fresh Poultry	chicken or turkey, whole	1-2 days	1 year
	chicken or turkey, pieces	1-2 days	9 months
Soups & Stews	vegetable or meat added	3-4 days	2 -3 months
Eggs	raw eggs in shell	3-5 weeks	beat yolks and whites together; then freeze.
Leftovers	cooked meat or poultry	3 to 4 days	2 -6 months
	pizza	3-4 days	1-2 months

Information adapted from www.foodsafety.gov *

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