



Food Safety Update

Food Safety . . . Dressing the Part

There is more to safe food handling than just washing your hands. Personal cleanliness also plays a large role in keeping food safe. Dirty clothes can harbor disease-causing microorganisms and contaminate food. Here are some guidelines for helping to keep food safe:

- ◆ Pull long hair back in order to keep it away from the food. Avoid touching your hair while preparing foods.
- ◆ Make sure your clothing is clean.
- ◆ Remove aprons when leaving food-prep areas. Never wear your apron while taking out the garbage or using the restroom.
- ◆ Remove jewelry before preparing or serving food. Jewelry can hide microorganisms and may be a safety hazard around equipment.

Safety & Sanitation . . .

Avoid eating, drinking, smoking, or chewing gum or tobacco while preparing or serving food.

Storing Food Safely

Food safety begins long before you prepare or serve meals. To make sure food is safe, precautions need to be taken as soon as you purchase foods and prepare to store them. All food products should be carefully inspected for damage and to ensure the food has been kept at proper temperatures. As you are purchasing and storing food, watch for these problem areas:

- ◆ Foods that have been thawed and refrozen.
- ◆ Foods that have insect infestation.
- ◆ Damaged foods or containers.
- ◆ Items that have been mishandled.
- ◆ Foods handled at incorrect temperatures.



All food should be stored properly to prevent contamination, spoilage, and the growth of harmful bacteria. Storage areas should be kept clean, dry, and at a proper temperature. The correct temperature for dry storage is 50° to 70° F. Keep stored food products at least 6 inches off the floor. Foods that need refrigeration should be kept at or below 40° F. Label and date all containers. A good way to ensure food quality and safety is by using the “First In, First Out”(FIFO) method. This simply means that the oldest products are used first and are stored at the

front of the shelves, with the newest products in the back. Cooked and raw foods should be stored separately to prevent cross-contamination. Always store cooked foods above raw foods. This will prevent juices from the raw foods from dripping onto the cooked foods. For the same reason, frozen foods that are being thawed in the refrigerator should always be stored below other foods. Frozen foods should be stored at 0° F or below. Hot foods should be divided into small, shallow containers before putting in the freezer or refrigerator.

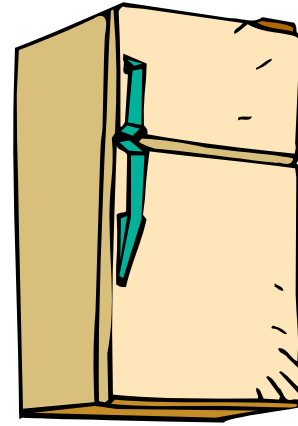


Preventing Cross-Contamination

Cross-contamination occurs when bacteria or other microorganisms move from one object to another. Microorganisms can attach to almost anything they come in contact with, including tables, equipment, utensils, cutting boards, dish towels, sponges, and even you! Here are some common sense methods for avoiding cross-contamination:

- ◆ Prepare raw meats, fish, and poultry in separate areas from raw fruits and vegetables or cooked foods.
- ◆ Use specific equipment for each type of food, such as using a separate cutting board for meats.
- ◆ Clean and sanitize all work surfaces, equipment, and utensils after each task.
- ◆ If you use a cloth or towel for wiping food spills, do not use it for any other purpose. If at all possible, use disposable towels and throw away after each use.
- ◆ Don't forget the importance of proper

handwashing.



How Should I Thaw Frozen Foods?

There are four acceptable methods of thawing frozen foods. These methods keep foods out of the temperature danger zone, which helps prevent the growth of harmful bacteria.

1. Thaw food in the refrigerator at 40° F or less. You will need to plan in advance for this method.
2. Thaw food under cold, running water. Clean and sanitize the sink after thawing food in this manner. Remember that food does not need to remain in the temperature danger zone of 40° F to 140° F for more than two hours. (This includes the time the food is thawed under the running water and time needed for preparation for cooking.)
3. Food can be thawed in a microwave oven, as long as it will be cooked immediately afterward. Microwave thawing can start the cooking process so food must be cooked immediately.
4. Food can be thawed as part of the cooking procedure as long as it reaches the required minimum internal cooking temperature.

Thawed foods should never be refrozen until after they have been cooked thoroughly.

Test Your Knowledge . . .



True or False:

1. Foods that are being held for service should be covered to reduce contamination.
2. Cooked foods should be held at 120° F or above.
3. Cold foods should be held at 40° F or below.
4. Produce should be prepared in a separate area from raw meats, poultry, or fish.
5. Knives should be cleaned and sanitized each time you prepare a different food product.
6. Frozen food can be thawed on the counter.
7. Fresh food should never be mixed with food that has been holding on a buffet table.

References:

ServSafe Coursebook from the National Restaurant Association
Culinary Essentials from Johnson and Wales University



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Quiz Answers: (1) T; (2) F; (3) T; (4) T; (5) T; (6) F; (7) T

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