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Keeping Food Safe

Handling, cooking and storing food safely are essential to prevent foodborne illnesses. It is important to understand that your behavior and activities contribute to food safety. Since we cannot see, smell, or taste harmful bacteria that may cause illness, we must follow these 4 principles to keep food safe:

- **Clean** and wash your hands and food preparation surfaces.
- **Separate** ready to eat and raw food items.
- **Cook** your food at the right temperature.
- **Chill** and refrigerate your food promptly.

Handling food at different instances

Shopping

- It is advisable to purchase refrigerated or frozen items after you have picked your non-perishable items; and take them home to be refrigerated again quickly.
- Check the expiry date carefully.
- Do not purchase food items with torn or leaking packaging.

Storage

- Refrigerate perishable food within 2 hours.
- Advised temperature of the refrigerator: 40 °F (4.4 °C) or below and the freezer at 0 °F (-17.7 °C) or below.
- Meat and poultry should be wrapped securely; this will maintain quality and will prevent meat juices from getting on other food.
- Wrap the package again with foil or plastic wrap with its original packing when freezing it.
- Discard cans that are dented, rusted, or swollen.

Thawing

There are different ways to safely thaw meat. Thawing in refrigerator allows for slow, safe thawing. You can also choose to thaw under cold water. Simply place food in a leak-proof plastic bag and submerge in cold water. Another way to thaw could be in a microwave. However, microwave thawed meat should be cooked immediately.

Preparation

- It is recommended to wash hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds before and after handling food.
- Prevent risk of cross-contamination. Keep raw meat away from other food. Wash your cutting boards, utensils, and countertops with hot, soapy water after cutting raw meat.

- Marinated meat and poultry should be covered when kept in the refrigerator.

Cooking

Choose to cook the meat at high temperature and allow it to rest for at least three minutes before carving or consuming. This will help destroy harmful bacteria from your meat.

Serving

- Hot food should be kept at 60 °C or warmer.
- Cold food should be kept at 4.4 °C or colder.
- Perishable food should not be left out more than 2 hours at room temperature.

Leftovers

- Discard any food left out at room temperature for more than 2 hours.
- Use shallow containers to keep food and immediately put in the refrigerator or freezer for rapid cooling.
- Consume cooked leftovers within 4 days.

Refreezing

Meat and poultry defrosted in the refrigerator may be refrozen before or after cooking.



References:

Krause's food & the nutrition care process, 14th edition
<https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/safe-food-handling/be-smart-keep-foods->

