



DEPARTMENT: AGRICULTURE

# Food preparation \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ home food safety



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Adapted from guidelines and recommendations of the FSIS (US Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Services, September 1997, Food Talk)  
and WHO (World Health Organisation, Geneva)

# Food preparation and home food safety



- Bacteria and other organisms are everywhere—on our hands, in the kitchen and even in the air. These bacteria and organisms can cause food-borne diseases if food is not handled properly.
- Some of these diseases can cause death.
- When food leaves the grocery store, you, the consumer, become an important link in the food-safety chain. Safely processed foods can become unsafe if not handled properly during transport and at home.
- The Directorate Veterinary Services regards illness as a result of contaminated food as a major health hazard. Contaminated food can be a hazard, especially to infants and the elderly.
- To help you keep food safe, to reduce risk of food-borne diseases and to protect your family, the following rules for home food safety and food preparation must be followed:



# Choose food processed for safety

## Meat

- Buy your meat from trustworthy sources such as wholesalers and butcheries who get their meat from approved abattoirs.
- If you are not sure, look for the “Approved/Goedgekeur” stamp on each quarter of the carcass.
- It is good practice to take a cooler bag along to the supermarket or shop when buying meat.



## Milk

- Buy only pasteurised milk from approved producers.
- Unpasteurised milk must be boiled before use.



## Fruits and vegetables

- When you buy fresh fruits and vegetables, wash them thoroughly before use.

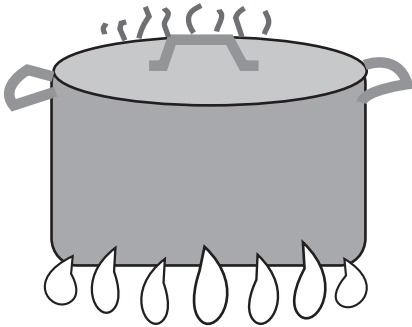
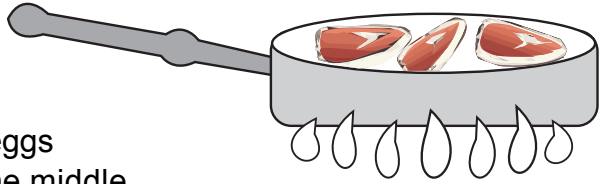


**Do not try to be brave,  
be safe**

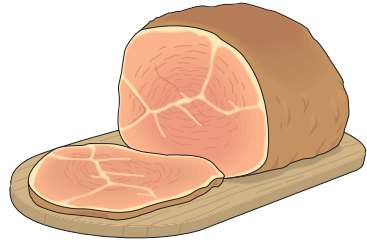


# Cook food thoroughly

- Food can be contaminated by disease-causing pathogens or organisms.
- Freezing or rinsing food is not enough to destroy harmful bacteria which may be present.
- Always cook perishable foods such as meat, poultry, fish and eggs right through to the middle at a temperature of no less than 70 °C.

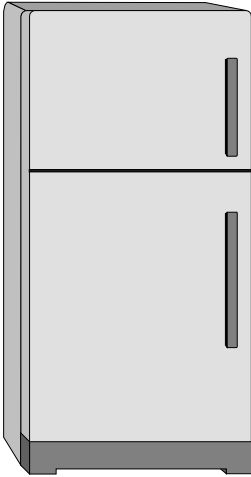


- When cutting into thoroughly cooked meat, there should not be a trace of pink juices.



**Cook it right before you  
take a bite**

# Thaw frozen food thoroughly



- Frozen food should be thawed thoroughly before cooking. This may take longer but will be safer.
- Always thaw or marinate meat, poultry and seafood in the refrigerator. Larger items may take longer and it is therefore important to plan ahead.
- To thaw foods faster, place in a leak-proof plastic bag and immerse into cold water. Water can be changed every 30 minutes to ensure that it stays cold. After thawing in this way, food should be refrigerated until it is ready to use.

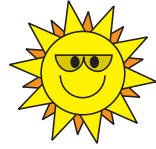


- When thawing food in a microwave oven, it should be cooked immediately thereafter, because microwave-thawed food reaches temperatures that encourage bacterial growth.

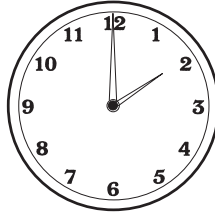
**Make it law—use the  
fridge to thaw**



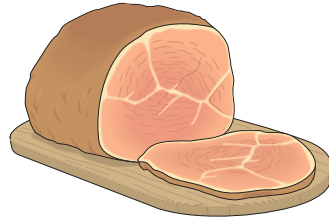
# Avoid keeping perishable foods at room temperature too long



Perishable foods such as meat and fish should never be left at room temperature for more than 2 hours, including preparation and serving time.



When meat or fish is left at room temperature for more than 2 hours bacterial growth can reach harmful levels and the food may no longer be safe.



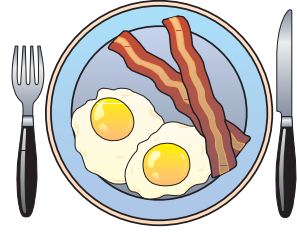
Once fruits and vegetables are cut, it is better to limit the time they are kept at room temperature. On very hot summer days, the time limit decreases to 1 hour.

**More than two is bad  
for you**



# Eat cooked foods immediately

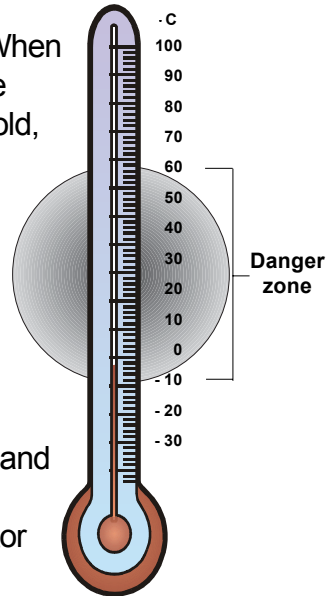
- Try to eat cooked foods as soon as possible after cooking.
- As soon as the cooked food starts to cool down, microbes start to grow, contaminating food.



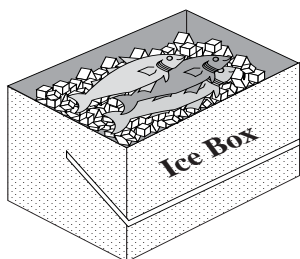
**Do not delay, eat food straight away**

# Store cooked foods carefully

- Food can be stored either hot or cold. When stored hot, it should be at a temperature of not lower than 60 °C. When stored cold, food should be at a temperature of not higher than -10 °C. The “danger zone” between these temperatures should be avoided because this is when food-borne bacteria multiply rapidly. These bacteria can double in number in as little as 20 minutes.
- Perishable foods such as meat, poultry and fish should be taken home immediately after purchase and stored in a refrigerator or freezer at the temperature indicated.





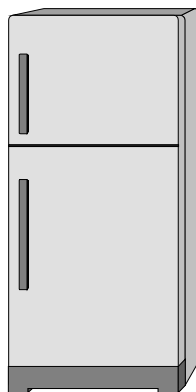
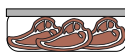


- ❑ At events such as buffets, foods should be placed over ice or a heat source for added safety. If this is not possible, set food out in smaller bowls and set out fresh food as needed.

**Hot or cool down to the bone,  
avoid the danger zone**

## Cool leftovers immediately

- ❑ Leftovers should be placed in the refrigerator immediately (within 2 hours).
- ❑ Food should be placed in shallow containers to cool down quickly.
- ❑ If the quantity of food is too large, it will not cool down quickly enough in the middle.
- ❑ Remember that bacteria are everywhere and that they can be reintroduced to foods after cooking.

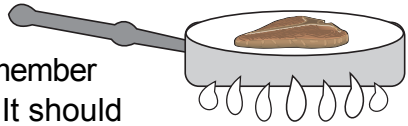


**Do not get sick,  
cool it quick**



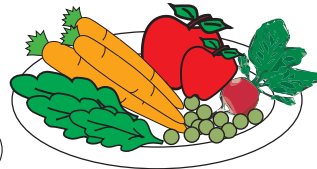
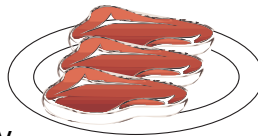
# Reheat cooked foods immediately

- ❑ During storage, the growth of microbes is slowed down, but remember that the microbes are not killed. It should therefore be ensured that food is reheated thoroughly through to the middle to a temperature of 70 °C.



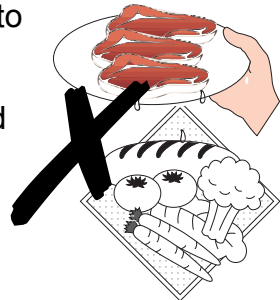
# Avoid contact between raw and cooked foods

- ❑ In the kitchen one works with different foods simultaneously.



It is important to keep these foods separate, especially raw foods such as meat, eggs, fish and cooked foods, as contamination can spread from the raw to the cooked foods.

- ❑ Juices from raw foods such as meat and seafood products should not come into contact with foods already cooked or foods that will be eaten raw, such as salads.



- ❑ After cutting raw meat or fish, clean the cutting board with soapy water before cutting raw vegetables on the same board. Packages with raw meat and fish should be placed on lower shelves of the refrigerator to prevent their juices from dripping onto other food.

**Watch that plate, do not cross-contaminate**

## **Wash hands thoroughly and repeatedly**



- ❑ Hands should be washed before working with food and after each interruption, such as using the toilet or changing the baby.
- ❑ Hands should also be washed after handling raw foods such as raw meat and fish.
- ❑ Bacteria can spread all over the kitchen if your hands are not washed properly.
- ❑ Hands should therefore be washed with soap and warm water before working with food and after each interruption.

**Do not be a dope, wash with soap**



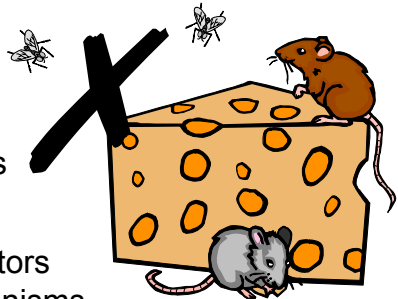
# Keep kitchen surfaces clean

- Kitchen surfaces should be cleaned regularly, especially after working with raw foods such as raw meat.
- If these surfaces are contaminated, your food could be affected, seriously damaging the health of your family.
- Dishcloths and cutlery should be kept clean as well.



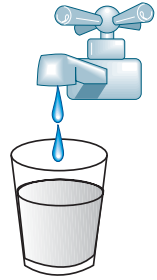
# Protect food from insects, rodents and other animals

- Food should be stored in tightly sealed containers where animals and rodents cannot reach it.
- Animals are potential contaminators and carry pathogenic micro-organisms.



# Use clean water

- Clean water is important for drinking and food preparation.
- This should be kept in mind especially with regard to infants.



**Be sure that the water  
is pure**

# Remember

- Your family's health is important, therefore keep to these easy-to-follow rules.
- Healthy food equals a healthy family. You are what you eat in more ways than one.
- Bacteria responsible for food-borne diseases cannot be seen, smelled or tasted.
- Food contamination mostly occurs after purchase; therefore keep to these easy-to-follow rules.
- Whenever you are unsure about the safety of food and all these rules have been followed, do not eat it.

**When in doubt,  
throw it out**



**For further information contact the Directorate Veterinary Services  
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**or**

**The Resource Centre Tel (012) 319 7141 or 319 7085**

