

Food Safety

1. Summer food safety is a major concern due to outdoor picnics and grilling.

a. The first rule of safe food preparation is to keep everything clean. The cleanliness rule applies to the areas where food is prepared and, most importantly, to the cook.

(1) Wash hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds before starting to prepare a meal and after handling raw meat or poultry.

(2) Always wash and sanitize cutting boards and utensils after using them for raw foods, such as seafood or chicken, and before using them for ready-to-eat foods. Consider using one cutting board only for foods that will be cooked, such as raw fish, and another only for ready-to-eat foods, such as bread, fresh fruit, and cooked fish.

(3) Do not put cooked meat on an unwashed plate or platter that has held raw meat. If you carry meat out to the grill on a platter, wash the platter before putting the cooked meat on it or use a different platter.

(4) Wash fresh fruits and vegetables thoroughly by rinsing them in warm water. Do not use soap or other detergents. If necessary, use a small scrub brush to remove surface dirt.

b. The second rule of safe food preparation is to keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold.

(1) Use a thermometer with a small-diameter stem to ensure that meats are completely cooked. Insert the thermometer 1 to 2 inches into the center of the food and wait 30 seconds to ensure an accurate measurement. Beef (including ground beef), lamb, and pork should be cooked to at least 71 degrees C (160 degrees F); whole poultry and thighs to 82 degrees C (180 degrees F); poultry breasts to 77 degrees C (170 degrees F); and ground chicken or turkey to 74 degrees C (165 degrees F). Do not eat poultry that is pink inside.

(2) Eggs should be cooked until the white and the yolk are firm. Avoid foods containing raw eggs, such as cake batter, cookie dough, eggnog, homemade ice cream, and mayonnaise, because of the risk of Salmonella. The commercial counterparts of these foods usually are safe because they are made with pasteurized eggs. Cooking egg-containing products to an internal temperature of at least 71 degrees C (160 degrees F) will kill the bacteria.

(3) Cooked foods should not be left out for more than 2 hours. Disease-causing bacteria grow in temperatures between 4 and 60 degrees C (40 and 140 degrees F). Cooked foods that have been in this temperature range for more than 2 hours should not be eaten.

(4) If a dish is to be served hot, get it from the grill or stove to the table as quickly as possible. Reheated foods should be brought to a temperature of at least 74 degrees C (165 degrees F). Keep cold foods in the refrigerator, in a cooler, or on a bed of ice until serving. This rule is particularly important to remember in the summer months.

c. After the meal is over, leftovers should be refrigerated as soon as possible. Leftovers should be used within 3 days.

d. Do not thaw meat and other frozen foods at room temperature. Instead, move them from the freezer to the refrigerator for 1 or 2 days, or defrost them submerged in cold water flowing fast enough to break up and float off loose particles in an overflow. You also can defrost frozen foods in a microwave oven or during the cooking process. Never taste any food if it looks or smells funny, or if it was contained in jars with leaky lids or in cans that are leaking, bulging, or severely damaged.

e. Bacteria grow rapidly at room temperature. For this reason, food should always be refrigerated while marinating. (Refrigeration slows bacterial growth.) Marinade that has been used on raw meat, poultry, or seafood contains raw juices. These juices may contain bacteria that, if eaten, could make you sick. The acid in marinade does not kill bacteria, it merely slows or stops bacterial growth.

f. Do not leave groceries in the car. Make the commissary or other retail food store your last stop before you go home.