



FOOD SAFETY UPDATE

Food Safety Practices

...bags, bottles, containers, and more

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altroute.htm](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/pubs/altroute.htm)

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Using Non-food Grade Materials

Avoid using the following four common non-food grade items:

1. Brown paper bags for cooking.

The USDA states: "Do not use brown paper bags from grocery or other stores for cooking. They are not sanitary, may cause a fire, and emit toxic fumes.



Intense heat may cause a bag to ignite, causing a fire in the oven. The ink, glue and recycled materials in paper bags can emit toxic fumes when they are exposed to heat."

2. Garbage cans for cooking.

These cans were not developed for cooking. It is especially dangerous cooking in galvanized garbage cans as they contain toxic metals that can leach into foods.

3. Film canisters for food storage.

If a product isn't sold to hold food, don't use it for this purpose.

4. Plastic trash bags for food storage.

These bags are not food grade plastic and chemicals from them may leach into the food.

Reusing One-Time-Use Items

• **Single-use plastic water bottles.**



These bottles are not meant to be refilled. They are hard to clean and dry. They are made of a plastic called polyethylene terephthalate

which, while considered safe for its intended use, was found to break down over time.

• **Disposable plastic utensils, cups and containers.**

This category includes containers from cottage cheese, sour cream, margarine, milk, etc. These items as well as plastic forks, spoons, knives, and cups are not made of materials designed for repeated use or repeated cleaning with hot soap and water. Cups and containers

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Reusing One-Time-Use Items (continued)

may have edges that curl over and collect bacteria that cannot be cleaned out. These containers are developed for specific types/temperatures of foods and may not stand up to all foods, such as high acid and/or hot foods.

- **Single-use wooden items.** Wooden food-related items such as shish kabob skewers and

popsicle sticks are meant for one time use only. Buy metal skewers, if you would like to reuse them. Inexpensive containers for making popsicles can be purchased. They come with reusable handles. If wooden sticks are preferred, use a new stick every time.



Mis-using Materials in the Microwave

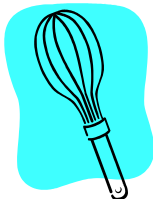
Always use microwave safe containers for heating foods. The following is the advice from the USDA:

- Microwave food in packaging materials only if the package directs, and then use only one time. Materials suitable for microwaving include oven bags, wax paper and plastic wrap. Do not let the plastic wrap touch the food, and do not reuse the wrap.
- Foam insulated trays and plastic wraps on

Never use plastic storage bags, grocery bags, newspapers, or aluminum foil in the microwave.

fresh meats in grocery stores are not intended by the manufacturer to be heated and may melt when in contact with hot foods, allowing chemical migration into the food. In addition, chemical migration from packaging material to a food does not necessarily require direct contact. Excessive heat applied to a closed container may drive off chemical gases from the container that can contaminate the enclosed food.

Handling Hard-to-Clean Items



Whisks: Stainless steel whisks with their wires attached to the handle are the easiest ones to clean.

Pastry and Basting Brushes: Use food grade pastry and basting brushes rather than paint brushes. Paint brushes may not have been treated to be acceptable for food use and/or their design may not be conducive to thorough cleaning.

Avoid cross contamination when using food brushes. Do not baste raw meat and cooked meat with the same brush. Always wash in hot soapy water and rinse well after use or run through the dishwasher if dishwasher safe.

Vegetable Brushes: Vegetable brushes are

designed for scrubbing hard-surfaced vegetables and fruits, such as melons and potatoes. Clean as you would basting brushes.

Sponges: Kitchen sponges provide an ideal environment for bacteria to grow. Bacteria thrive in the warmth, moisture and food collected on sponges.

Sponges should be cleaned and dried after each use and changed frequently. Cleaning sponges in the microwave is not recommended as there are no precise guidelines.

Dishcloths are easier to keep clean than sponges and can be purchased very inexpensively. A clean one can be used every time a person does the dishes or wipes the counters.