



# FOOD SAFETY UPDATE

## Sprucing Up Food Safety Habits for Spring

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**For additional food safety information about meat, poultry, or egg products, call the toll-free USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-674-6854.**

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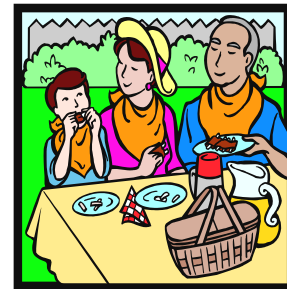
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No matter what type of food your springtime celebrations include, be sure you follow the four basic food safety principles:

- **Clean**—Wash hands and surfaces often.
- **Separate**—Don't allow cross-contamination between raw and cooked foods.

- **Cook**—Cook food to the safe internal temperature. Check temperature with a food thermometer.



- **Chill**—Refrigerate or freeze food promptly.

## Spring Clean Your Kitchen

As the days get longer and the weather warms up, many people are preparing for the annual event of spring cleaning.

When cleaning a kitchen, it's more important to remember there is more to the job than shiny floors and neatly arranged cupboards.

This is a great time to target harmful bacteria that can lurk on kitchen surfaces and even in your refrigerator. Salmonella, Staphylococcus, E. coli, and Listeria are just some of the bacteria that may be hanging out in your kitchen. Though you cannot see them, bacteria

are everywhere. They especially like moist environments. A clean and dry kitchen will help prevent foodborne illness.

By following these cleaning steps you can make your kitchen and your food safer:

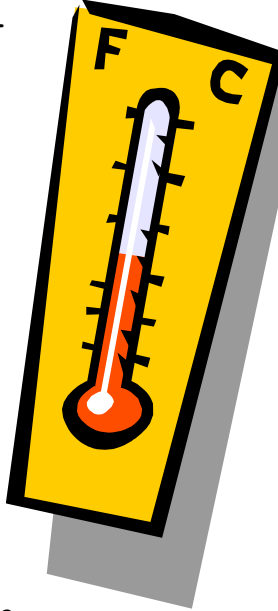
- **Always clean surfaces thoroughly with hot soapy water.** Sanitize your countertops with diluted chlorine bleach or a disinfectant kitchen cleaner. Use 1 teaspoon bleach to 1 quart of water. Be sure to dry with clean paper towels, after each cleaning.  
*(continued on page 3)*



## Handling Leftovers

Springtime celebrations are just like any other—they result in leftovers. When the party is over, food should be refrigerated immediately. Remember, foods should not be in the danger zone (40°F to 140°F) for more than two hours. If the weather is above 90°F, the time is cut to one hour.

Leftovers should be refrigerated in shallow containers for rapid cooling. Again, the goal is to have foods pass through the danger zone as quickly as possible to



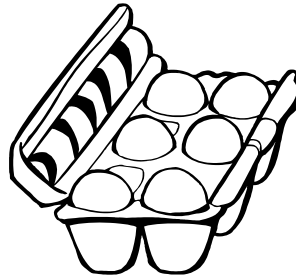
inhibit bacteria growth. Use leftovers within 3-4 days. If you want to reheat leftovers, heat them to 165°F.

Use a food thermometer to make sure food is cooked to a temperature high enough to kill harmful bacteria. Insert the thermometer into the thickest part of the food. A food thermometer should also be used to check the internal temperature of combination dishes, casseroles and reheated foods.

## Keeping Springtime Foods Safe

### Eggs

Whether in salads, casserole, desserts, or deviled, eggs are a favorite Springtime food. When purchasing eggs, always choose clean, refrigerated uncracked eggs. Do not leave them unrefrigerated for more than two hours. Cook eggs until yolks are firm. Casseroles and other dishes containing eggs should be cooked to 160°F.



least 145°F. Use a food thermometer to measure these temperatures.

Ready-to-eat foods can be real time-savers for your spring celebration. "Ready-to-Eat" or "Fully Cooked" means the foods have been cooked to a temperature high enough to kill harmful bacteria and that no further cooking is required. Ready-to-eat hams, barbecued ribs, beef roasts and roasted or fried chicken can simply be removed from the package and served. If you want to warm these foods, reheat ready-to-eat hams to 140°F and barbecued ribs, beef roasts and chicken to 165°F.

### Ham and Lamb

These meats can be purchased ready-to-cook. The label will state "ready-to-cook" or "not pre-cooked." Follow the manufacturer's cooking instructions. Ham should be cooked to an internal temperature of 160°F; for lamb at

**As a safety precaution, heat ready-to-eat foods to 165°F, if they are to be eaten by pregnant women, children under 5, elderly, or those with a compromised immune system.**

## Spring Clean Your Kitchen *(continued)*

- **Disinfect dish cloths often.** Launder dishcloths frequently using soap and hot water. Dry them in the dryer. These items harbor bacteria and when wet, promote bacterial growth. Consider using paper towels to clean up kitchen surfaces. When done, throw away the towel.
- **Rid your refrigerator of spills, bacteria, mold and mildew.** Clean your refrigerator weekly to kill germs that could contaminate foods. To tackle bacteria, mold and mildew, clean interior refrigerator surfaces with hot soapy water. Rinse with a damp cloth and dry with a clean cloth. Manufacturers recommend against using chlorine bleach, as it can damage seals, gaskets and linings.
- **Clean your kitchen sink drain and disposal.** Do this once or twice a week by pouring a solution of 1 teaspoon of chlorine bleach in 1 quart of water down the drain. Food particles get trapped in the drain and disposal, creating the perfect environment for bacterial growth.

## Test Your Food Safety Knowledge

1. At what temperature should your refrigerator be maintained?
  - A. 60°F
  - B. 45°F
  - C. 40°F
2. In order to properly wash your hands before or after handling food, what is the minimum amount of time you should scrub your hands?
  - A. 10 seconds
  - B. 20 seconds
  - C. 1 minute
3. Which of the following bacteria are responsible for causing the greatest number of foodborne illnesses?
  - A. Salmonella
  - B. Campylobacter
  - C. E. coli
4. To what temperature should leftovers be reheated?
  - A. 140°F
  - B. 165°F
  - C. 180°F
5. The majority of foodborne illnesses are a result of which of the following?
  - A. Improper handling of foods by consumer
  - B. Improper handling of foods by restaurant
  - C. Improper processing of foods by manufacturer
6. When sanitizing dishcloths at home using chlorine bleach, how much bleach should be added per quart of water?
  - A. 1 teaspoon
  - B. 1/2 cup
  - C. 1/2 quart

*Answers: C,B,B,B,A,A*