Clean Sweep - Food Safety Tips

The biggest party crasher at summer picnic and camp outs is food borne bacteria. You can't see them, you can't taste them - but you sure can feel them if illness occurs hours or days later.

Each year about one in every ten Americans has an illness caused by food. Most of these cases result in simple stomachaches or diarrhea. If you prepare and then store foods properly, they will never leave their calling card behind. It's up to you to select, store, prepare, and then serve safe foods for you and your family. The most important steps to keep these uninvited guests away are very easy to do.

The Golden Rules Of Food Safety

ALWAYS WASH YOUR HANDS BEFORE AND AFTER HANDLING FOOD.
ALWAYS WASH YOUR HANDS AFTER USING THE REST ROOM, etc.
When preparing food, keep surfaces and utensils clean. Use one cutting board for raw meats, another for fruits and vegetables that won't be cooked. **WASH YOUR HANDS BETWEEN EACH TASK!**

Keeping a clean kitchen area savvy on cleaning up after the meal and keeps food related illnesses at a minimum. A clean heavy plastic sheet can declare kitchen boundaries.

Read the preparation directions twice before beginning.

- **WASH YOUR HANDS**

- Pick up trash as you create it.
- Soak pots and pans after using. Saves on that stuck on food mess after the meal.
  A simple trick is to fill dishpans with hot, sudsy water. This serves two purposes for me.

  When preparing food, you can toss the dirty dishes into the hot water to soak while you cook. This makes for easier cleanup.

  As you cook, stick your hands in the water to clean.
- **Keep cold food cold and hot food hot.**
- 140 degrees F or above and 40 degrees F or below. Do not leave food at room temperature longer than 2 hours (1 hour when summer room temperatures are hot). Thaw foods in the refrigerator, not on the counter. Also make sure that meat juices can't drip onto other foods. To store hot foods, refrigerate immediately in shallow containers to cool them more quickly.
- Keep chicken and chicken products, juices away from other foods.
- Clean cutting boards between each use.
- Be considerate of the cleaning crew while cooking, your next on the duty roster.
- Clean the dishes with soap, sanitize, rise all the soap off.
- Put utensils and pots back in the right places.
- **Keep dry items dry**, Don't place wet towels in with the dry goods.

- **WASH YOUR HANDS**

ALWAYS SERVE FOOD ON CLEAN PLATTERS. Now, you are probably thinking - "I know that! Why are they saying that to me?" But think? Have you every taken raw meat to the barbecue on a plate and then put the cooked meat back on the same plate to serve? Don't do this unless you have washed the dish in between. Raw meat has bacteria that will spread to the cooked meat.

IF IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT! If you have any question in your mind about the freshness or safety of eating a food product, throw it out. It is better to be safe than sorry!

Cook all the Food. Leftover raw meats spoil faster than cooked meat.

Why is this more of a problem in camping?

Did you pack the refrigerator? Temperatures are harder to control in the out-of-doors. Too Hot or Too Cold are what the campers say, But not your food. Camping temperatures

usually range in the ideal temperatures for bacteria growth. Also Bugs and Dirt are naturally at home at the campsite.

Salmonella and Food Safety

Chicken, turkey, pork, beef, and other meat and poultry products are important sources of protein and other nutrients. Unfortunately, these foods -- like eggs, raw milk, and all raw foods of animal origin – may also carry salmonella and other bacteria. The good news is that these bacteria don't have to cause illness. Routine food safety can destroy salmonella and other bacteria.

Hamburger and any ground meat has increased surface area and a increased risk for contamination.

What is salmonella?
The salmonella family includes abbot 2,000 different strains of bacteria, but only 10 strains cause most reported salmonella infections. Strains that may cause no symptoms in animals can make people sick, and vice versa. A salmonella bacterium is a one-celled organism that can't be seen, touched, or tasted. The bacteria are common in the intestinal tracts and waste of livestock, poultry, dogs, cats, rats, and other warm-blooded animals.

What is salmonellosis?
Salmonellosis, or a salmonella infection, is the illness that can occur if live salmonella bacteria enter the body – usually through food. Most reported outbreaks of food-born illness are caused by bacteria, and salmonellosis is the most common bacterial food-borne illness. Salmonellosis is usually preventable.

How can salmonella bacteria on raw meat, poultry make people sick?
First, "food abuse" allows bacteria to survive and often to multiply. For example, if the meat knife is used to cut the salad lettuce without first being washed, the lettuce can be contaminated by any bacteria on the meat. The person who eats the salad then also eats the bacteria.

Next, if the bacteria survive the stomach acid, they reproduce themselves in the small intestine. One cell becomes two, two become four, four become sixteen and so on. When there are "enough" bacteria, they cause a salmonella infection.

How many bacteria does it take to make people sick?
There is no exact number, but the more bacteria consumed, the more likely a person is to get sick. Healthy adults have eaten food containing millions of bacteria without getting sick. Other people have gotten sick from as few as 10 bacteria in the food.

What are the symptoms of salmonellosis?

According to the Centers for Disease Control, stomach pain occurs within 6 to 48 hours after the food was eaten. Most people get diarrhea, and many people have upset stomachs, chills, fever or headache. Most people feel better within 3 to 5 days. Many persons with salmonellosis may believe they have the flu and may never see a doctor.

How many people get sick from salmonellosis?
At least 40,000 salmonella infections are reported every year, but experts believe that between 500,000 and 4 million persons each year actually contract salmonellosis.

How does the doctor know a person has salmonellosis?
The only way to tell for sure is to conduct laboratory test on the stools of the person who got sick, a process that takes several days.

How many people die from salmonellosis?
Salmonella infections can be life-threatening for the very young, the very old and for persons already weakened by other serious diseases, such as AIDS. Reports show about 2 deaths for every 1,000 known cases of salmonellosis, but experts believe that about 500 persons each year actually die form salmonella infections.

What foods are most likely to make people sick?
Foods don't make people sick -- bacteria do. Any raw food of animal origin -- meat, poultry, raw milk, fish, and shellfish -- may carry salmonellae. The bacteria can survive to cause illness if these specific foods are not thoroughly cooked. the bacteria can also cause illness if they contaminate any other food that comes in contact with the raw food, either directly or by way of dirty hands or dirty equipment. Salmonellosis is a world- wide, food-chain problem that can't be "blamed" on any one food.

Anti-Salmonella Strategy

Bacteria on raw foods of animal origin do not have to cause illness. Investigations of actual outbreaks reported to the Centers for Disease Control show that:

bacteria + food safety mistakes can = illness.

Errors during food shopping, transport, preparation, serving, or storage can enable bacteria to grow or even just survive. If foods are prepared a day or more ahead of time and food handlers make mistakes, the chance of illness can increase, because bacteria have more time to multiply. In outbreaks traced to bacteria or other organisms in meat or poultry, one or more of the following eight food handling mistakes enabled bacteria on raw products to survive and cause food-borne illness.

oImproper cooling oImproper hot storage of cooked foods oUndercooked oCross-contamination of cooked foods by raw foods oInadquate cleaning of equipment oInfected person touching cooked food oEating raw meat or poultry oInadequate reheating of cooked and chilled foods

Therefore, the key to preventing illness -- at home, in a restaurant, at a church picnic, anywhere – is to destroy the bacteria. Below are some hints, based on information from actual outbreaks, that can destroy or stop growth of salmonella bacteria and other bacteria that can cause illness.

CLEAN IT.

Salmonella bacteria can survive in water, soil, and on the kitchen counter, so sanitation can make a big difference -- especially in preventing bacteria that could be on raw products from contaminating other foods. (This is called cross-contamination.)

* **Wash your hands frequently with SOAP and water for at least 20 seconds** – after you use the bathroom, before you start food preparation, before you start working with a new food or a new tool, when you finish food preparation, and before you serve food.

* **Prevent cross-contamination.** Never let raw meat and poultry, or their juices, come into contact with cooked meat or any other food -- raw or cooked.

* **If you use a dishcloth for cleaning kitchen surfaces, switch to a clean one after you work with raw meat or poultry.** Choose a type that will stand up to a laundering in how water and bleach. Otherwise, use paper towels and throw away after use.

* **Cut raw meat or poultry on an acrylic cutting board that is thoroughly cleaned** after each use. Use that favorite (but porous) wooden one only for cutting bread or vegetables.

* **Wash cutting boards, knives, counter, and other implements with detergent and hot water** immediately after you use them with raw meat and poultry.

* **After washing and rinsing equipment and counter, professional food service workers also sanitize and rinse them.** Consumers who want to sanitize implements after washing can use a solution of 2 to 3 teaspoons household bleach in 1 quart of water, followed by a cold water rinse. (Note: Sanitizing doesn't work on dirty surfaces, so clean them first.)

* **Serve cooked meat and poultry on clean plates.** When you replenish the banquet, replenish the serving plates. Don't put grilled meat or poultry back on the plate with raw juices.

* **Keep pets and other animals away from food**, and away from cooking and eating surfaces and equipment. Squirrels and mice contaminate, as do insects.

COOK IT.

Salmonellae -- however many there are -- do not survive when beef or pork is cooked to an internal temperature of at least 160 degrees F, or when poultry is cooked to 185 degrees F. (Some experts believe that this country's passion for rare beef explains why beef -- which carries very low levels of salmonella bacteria -- is involved in more reported salmonellosis outbreaks than poultry.) Always cook meat and poultry thoroughly, and be just as careful when micro waving as when using traditional ovens.

* **Using a meat thermometer** to check "doneness." If meat is too thin for a thermometer, follow the recipe and cook till the juices are clear.

* **Never interrupt cooking** -- it's a "half-baked idea" that can make you sick. After thawing foods in the microwave, cook them immediately.

* **If reheating** leftovers, cover and reheat thoroughly to 165°F just in case bacteria survived in the food during refrigeration of freezing. Let sauces and gravies reach a rolling boil.

* **Don't store the latecomer's cooked meat and poultry dinner in an off or warm oven**. Hold the food above 140°F. (But, within 2 hours after cooking, refrigerate the food.)

COOL IT.

Refrigeration and even freezing do not kill all salmonella or other bacteria, but proper cooling can usually prevent salmonellae from multiplying.

* **Refrigerate raw meat and poultry as soon as possible** after you take it out of the grocery meat case. Ice it down in the camp cooler

* **Refrigerate food containing cooked meat or poultry within 2 hours after cooking.**

* **Refrigerate or freeze cooked meat or poultry casseroles in covered shallow pans** rather than deep pots. leave space around the containers to let cold air circulate.

* **Never thaw frozen meat and poultry on the kitchen counter**. Thaw it in the refrigerator or, if you are in a hurry, in a bag under cold running water. It will thaw in a cooler.

* **Remember that refrigeration or freezing cannot be counted on to kill many salmonella bacteria**. it can't "fix" a mistake such as leaving cooked turkey at room temperature for more than 2 hours -- it can only postpone the risk of illness. If in doubt, throw food out.

Do you have other questions about meat and poultry food safety or labeling?

Cleanup

As soon as the fire or stove is cleared of cook pots, put on a pot of water to heat for washing. After the meal, the cleanup crew goes to work. Pour half the water into a second pot and use one for washing, the other for rinsing. While many campers find that hot water alone is both ecologically sound and effective for most dishwashing tasks, a little biodegradable soap in the first pot will help cut grease, and in the second pot a few drops of rinse agent such as liquid bleach will kill any germs the heat doesn't destroy. Each Scout wipes out his cup, bowl, and plate with leaves, pine needles, or snow, washes his gear, and lets it air dry. Then the cleanup crew washes the utensils and scours the pots and pans with a scrub pad or sand.

Dispose of dishwater by sprinkling it over a wide area far from camp and any sources of water. Next, police the cooking area. If the meals are tasty and the amount of food you've prepared is in line with the number of people in your patrol, every pot will be licked clean. However, you may have a little garbage such as apple cores and banana peels left over. These can be fed a few at a time into a hot campfire, though anything that will not burn must be carried home in a trash bag. *Do not* bury any garbage, even in the latrine.

Finally, reassemble the cook kit and store it with the utensils under the dining fly.

PATROL DISHWASHING EQUIPMENT

Two large pots—one for rinsing (6–8 qt.), one for washing (4–6 qt.)
One dish swab
Liquid soap in plastic container
Chemical sanitizing agents
One plastic sheet, 4 by 4 feet
Two or three scouring pads
Dunking equipment (tongs or bag)
Water container
Roll of paper towels

Cleanup Scouts Do This

1. Start with full pot of boiling water. Remove from fire and use some for washing and remainder for rinsing.
2. Mix part of boiling water with liquid soap and cold water for washing.
3. Add sanitizing agent to the remaining hot water for rinse water.
4. While other Scouts wash their utensils (see below), cleanup Scouts begin cleaning cooking pots.

Other Scouts Do This

5. Each Scout wipes off his own eating utensils.
6. Then he washes them in pot of wash water.
7. Now he rinses and sanitizes utensils by dunking them in pot of rinse water.
8. Finally, he air dries utensils by placing them on a plastic sheet. Store in flyproof container.