



Safe Food Handling Techniques

General Food Safety

There are four simple keys to making sure that your food is safe from harmful bacteria:

- **Clean:** Always wash your hands, utensils, and surfaces with hot, soapy water before and after preparing food.
- **Separate:** Keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood separate from other foods when they are stored and when you are preparing them.
- **Cook:** Be sure to cook food for a long enough time and at a high enough temperature to kill harmful bacteria.
- **Chill:** Put prepared foods and leftovers into the refrigerator or freezer as soon as possible. Don't defrost foods at room temperature – thaw them in the refrigerator, under cold running water, or in the microwave.

Fruit and Vegetable Safety

- Rinse all fruits and vegetables with water, even if you don't eat the outside of the fruit or vegetable (such as bananas, cantaloupe, or oranges). If necessary, use a small vegetable brush to remove surface dirt. Before opening them, rinse the tops of the cans when using canned fruits and vegetables.
- Try to cut away damaged or bruised areas of fruits and vegetables.
- Use juices that have been pasteurized or treated to kill harmful bacteria. Pasteurized juices can be found in refrigerated sections of stores. Treated juices can be kept on the shelf in stores and are in juice boxes, bottles, and cans. Unpasteurized or untreated juice should have a warning label that says, "This product has not been pasteurized and therefore may contain harmful bacteria that can cause serious illness in children, the elderly, and persons with weakened immune systems."

Cooking Safety

- Always use clean, dry oven mitts whenever you use the oven.
- When cooking on the stove, make sure pot handles are turned away from the front of the stove so the pots are not accidentally bumped or knocked off.
- When uncovering a pot on the stove or a container from the microwave, open the lid away from you to let the steam out.
- Always turn the sharp edge of a knife or vegetable peeler away from you as you use it (use caution when handling a cheese grater, too). Keep your finger tips away from the sharp edge of the knife when cutting.
- Use a cutting board when you chop or slice ingredients.
- When using a blender, keep the lid on. Turn the blender off before you put any utensils inside the blender container.

For more information on food safety, visit www.foodsafety.gov.