

USDA Provides Food Safety Tips to Grilling Pros and Beginners

WASHINGTON, May 27, 2021 — As millions of Americans get ready to commemorate Memorial Day and welcome summer, the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reminds people to keep it safe this weekend: follow the latest [CDC guidance](#) for COVID-19 and remember your [food safety practices](#).

Rates of foodborne illness tend to increase during the summer months because germs grow faster in warmer, more humid weather. People also cook and eat outside, making shortcuts to food safety tempting because they are away from the convenience of soap and running water at the kitchen sink.

“Memorial Day marks the beginning of warmer weather and summer fun,” said Sandra Eskin, USDA’s Deputy Under Secretary for Food Safety. “Don’t let foodborne illness ruin the cookout –follow food safety guidelines like washing your hands, thoroughly cooking your food and checking food temperature with a thermometer.”

For those who choose to celebrate outdoors, USDA has some advice for grilling novices and pros.

Use a Food Thermometer

Many people may be grilling on their own for the first time. One important lesson for first-time grillers is to remember that color is never a reliable indicator of safety and doneness. Use a food thermometer to ensure the following safe internal temperatures:

- Cook poultry (whole or ground) to 165 F.
- Cook beef, pork, lamb and veal steaks, chops and roasts to 145 F. For safety and quality, allow meat to rest for at least three minutes before carving or consuming.
- Cook ground beef, pork, lamb and veal to 160 F.
- Cook egg dishes to 160 F.
- Cook fish to 145 F.
- Don’t have a food thermometer? Call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854).

Although frozen products may appear to be pre-cooked or browned, they should be handled and prepared no differently than raw products and must be grilled to appropriate temperatures. Frozen products may be labeled with phrases such as “Cook and Serve,” “Ready to Cook” and “Oven Ready” to indicate they must be cooked.

Thoroughly Cook Mechanically Tenderized Meat

Many grill masters enjoy using already tenderized meats that have marinades added to get the most flavor out of their meal. However, mechanically tenderized beef, including cuts that are prepackaged in marinades, must be cooked thoroughly to ensure food safety.

- If the outside of the meat contains bacteria, it will be transferred to the inside of the meat during mechanical tenderization, requiring it to be cooked to kill the germs.

- The best way to ensure a worry-free barbecue is to thoroughly cook mechanically tenderized meat. Use your food thermometer and follow USDA's recommendations for safe internal temperatures mentioned above.

Follow the One-Hour Rule on Hot Days

When the temperature outside rises above 90 F, perishable food such as meat and poultry, dips and cold salads, or cut fruits and vegetables are only safe to sit out on the table for one hour. After one hour, harmful bacteria, which can cause foodborne illness, may start to grow. To prevent this, keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot.

According to a recent [USDA survey](#) (PDF, 2.4 MB), nearly 85 percent of participants said they don't keep cold foods on ice when they serve them. Keep cold foods at an internal temperature of 40 F or below by keeping food on ice or refrigerated until ready to serve.

In the same survey, 66 percent of participants indicated they did not keep their cooked foods, like burgers and hot dogs, warm after cooking. Hot perishable foods should be kept warm (above 140 F) until they're eaten or refrigerate leftovers within one hour.

Know Your Outdoor Environment

At your outside barbecue, make sure to have hand sanitizer or moist towelettes available to keep your hands clean before, during and after food preparation. Here are some suggestions:

- Use warm, soapy water to wash hands for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food.
- Use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol.
- Use alcohol-based moist towelettes to sanitize cutting boards or utensils.

For any summer food safety questions, call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854) or chat live at ask.usda.gov from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday. [Remember food safety](#) to have a safe and happy Memorial Day weekend!

Access news releases and other information at USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service's (FSIS) website at www.fsis.usda.gov/newsroom.

Follow FSIS on Twitter at twitter.com/usdafoodsafety or in Spanish at: twitter.com/usdafoodsafes.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy, and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit www.usda.gov.