

Seven Super Steps to Safe Food In the Summer

During warm weather, it is especially important to take extra precautions and practice safe food handling when preparing perishable foods such as meat, poultry, seafood and egg products. The warmer weather conditions may be ideal for outdoor picnics and barbecues, but they also provide a perfect environment for bacteria and other pathogens in food to multiply rapidly and cause foodborne illness. Follow the suggestions below to Fight BAC! ® (foodborne bacteria) and reduce the risk of foodborne illness this summer.

1. Wash, Wash, Wash Your Hands (as in Row, Row, Row Your Boat). Always, wash your hands with warm water and soap for at Least 20 seconds before and after handling food.
2. Marinating Mandate. Always marinate food in the refrigerator. Don't use sauce that was used to marinate raw meat or poultry on cooked food. Boil used marinade before applying to cooked food.
3. Hot, Hot, Hot. When grilling foods, preheat the coals on your grill 20 to 30 minutes, or until the coals are lightly coated with ash.
4. Temperature Gauge. Use a food thermometer to ensure that food reaches a safe internal temperature.
5. Where's the Beef? Chicken and Fish? Hamburgers should be cooked to 160° F, while large cuts of beef such as roasts and steaks may be cooked to 145° F for medium rare to 160° F for medium. Poultry must reach a temperature of 165° F. Fish should be opaque and flake easily.
6. Stay Away from that Same Old Plate. When taking foods off the grill, do not put the cooked food items back on the same plate that held raw food, unless it has been washed with hot, soapy water first. And in hot weather (above 90° F) foods should never sit out for more than one hour before going in the refrigerator.
7. Icebox Etiquette. A full cooler will maintain its cold temperature longer than one that is partially filled so it is important to pack plenty of extra ice or freezer packs to ensure a constant cold temperature. Keep the cooler out of the direct sun.