

Barbeque Food Safety

Good food and summer relaxation go hand in hand. However, outside of our kitchen environment, attention to food safety is still important. Poor food handling practices can lead to illness ranging from mild to severe symptoms. Here are some safety tips that can help you.

- Refrigerate or freeze meat as soon as possible after purchase. Store on lowest refrigerator shelf away from contact with other foods.
- Thaw frozen meat in the refrigerator, under cold running water or with a microwave, but not on the counter at room temperature.
- Wash hands after using the toilet, before preparing foods and after handling raw meat.
- Wash and sanitize counter tops, cutting boards, utensils and sinks after contact with raw meats and poultry. Use hot soapy water to wash surfaces and sanitize using water containing household bleach (1 teaspoon of bleach per gallon of water).
- Ensure meats such as hamburger, poultry, pork and fish are cooked until well done. There should be no pink color in the centre of the hamburger or the pork products. In poultry the juices should run clear and the joints should be free of blood. Fish flakes easily when done. Reaching an internal temperature of 74°C (165°F) will ensure the meat is cooked thoroughly, the only exception being whole poultry which should reach an internal temperature of 82°C (180°F). Meat temperature can be best determined by using a probe thermometer in the thickest part of the meat.

Often, high cooking temperatures and flames can burn the outside without adequately cooking the inside. Larger roasts or whole poultry can be cooked over a pan of water placed over the charcoal or burners to eliminate flames but still retain that characteristic barbecue flavour. Partial cooking just prior to barbecuing makes it easier to attain thorough cooking as well as being a time saver.

- Place cooked meat on clean plates and platters and not those that have been in contact with raw meat.
- Make sure other foods such as potato and pasta salads are kept refrigerated until just prior to meal time.
- Refrigerate leftovers promptly in shallow containers. If there is any doubt about how long the food has been unrefrigerated, play it safe and discard it.