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Plate It Safe 42 Essential Ways to be safe at the plate
Michigan State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service
Research Report
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42 essential ways to be safe at the plate



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1 Keep packages of raw meat separate from other foods, particularly foods for fresh eating.

2 Use plastic bags to keep raw meat, fish or poultry from dripping on other foods.

3 Buy packaged precooked foods only if packaging is sound (no tears).

4 Buy products labeled "Keep refrigerated" only if they are stored in a refrigerated case.

5 Buy unpackaged deli meats or poultry only if not in contact with other food.

6 Buy frozen foods only if they are solidly frozen.

7 Report problems with packaging, products, storage or sanitation to store management; if problems are not corrected, notify health authorities.

8 Shop for meat, fish and poultry last; pack in ice chest if time from store to home will be longer than 1 hour, especially in hot weather. Place inside car, not in trunk.

9 Avoid purchasing fresh meat, fish or poultry from temporary stands.



Your refrigerator

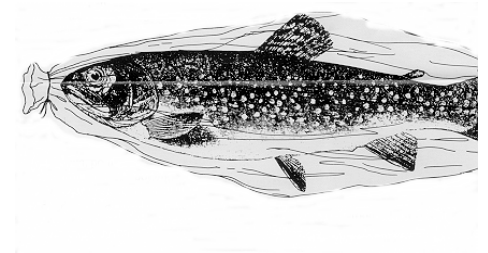
10 Keep it clean.

11 Use a thermometer. Keep refrigerator temperature at 40°F or colder.

12 Keep raw meat, fish and poultry separate from other foods. Use plates, plastic bags or covered containers to keep meat and poultry juices from dripping on other foods or refrigerator surfaces.

13 Refrigerate products with "Keep refrigerated" labels.

14 If refrigerator fails, keep door closed and hold food at 40°F or cook within a few hours.



Your freezer

15 Maintain temperature at 0°F for best quality

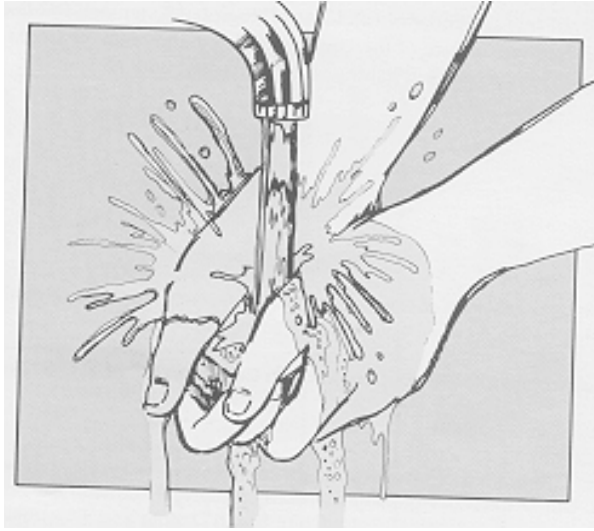
16 Use freezer wrap, freezer bags or aluminum foil over commercial wrap for freezer packages

17 If freezer fails, keep door closed. Refreeze meat or poultry still containing ice crystals. If freezer compartment fails, keep door closed and find other cold storage within a few hours. OR, cook and serve the product.

Wash up

18 After handling raw meat, fish or poultry, touching animals, using bathroom or changing diapers, wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before beginning food preparation.

19 Wash hands, counter, equipment and utensils after handling raw meat, fish or poultry.



20 Wear clean plastic gloves over skin cuts, particularly when handling cooked products.

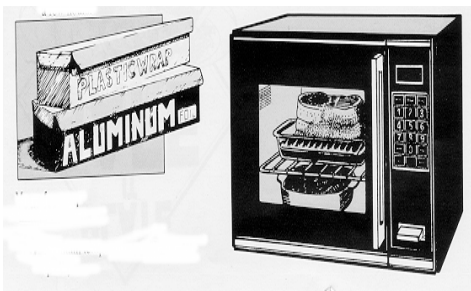
Before you cook

21 Thaw foods only in refrigerator, under cold water changed every 30 minutes, or in microwave (followed by immediate cooking).

22 Stuff meats, poultry and fish just before cooking. Avoid buying fresh, prestuffed whole poultry. Buy fully cooked, prestuffed whole poultry only if it will be served within 2 hours.

23 Don't taste raw or partially cooked meat or poultry - or eggs, fish or shellfish (any food of animal origin).

24 Marinate raw products in the refrigerator, not on counter. Do not reuse marinade.

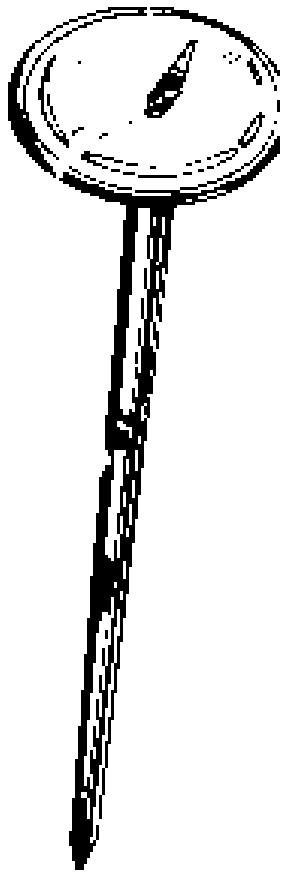


25 Don't let juices from raw meat, fish or poultry come in contact with any other foods, raw or cooked, unless they will be cooked together.

Get cooking

26 Use appropriate microwavable containers for microwave heating.

See owner's manual.



27 If your microwave has a temperature probe, use it. Cover raw meat or poultry to microwave, and check temperature in at least three spots.

28 Use rotating microwave pad or rotate foods manually during microwaving. Let food stand for recommended time before serving.

29 Use a meat thermometer to measure safe internal temperature of meat, fish and poultry more than 2 inches thick (160°F or above for meat, 180°F or above for poultry).

30 For meat or poultry less than 2 inches thick, clear juices and no pink in the center are signs of doneness.

31 When using smokers or slow cookers, start with fresh rather than frozen, chunks rather than roasts or large cuts, and be sure the recipe includes a liquid. Check internal temperature in three spots to be sure food reaches 160°F.

32 Avoid interrupted cooking. Never partially cook products to finish grilling or roasting later.

33 Roast meat or poultry in oven temperatures of 325°F or above. Avoid "cooking without a heat source" (i.e., preheating oven, putting in roast and turning off oven).

Serve it up safe

34 Serve cooked foods on clean plates, with clean utensils (never put barbecued meats back on the platter that held raw meats).

35 Keep hot foods above 140°F.

36 environmental temperatures of 90°F or warmer hold cooked foods no longer than 1 hour before reheating refrigerating or freezing. Below 90°F no longer than 2 hours.

What to do with leftovers

37 Remove stuffing before cooling or freezing meat or poultry.

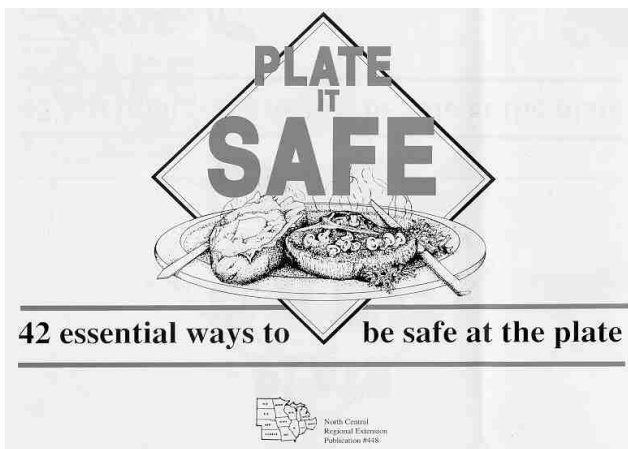
38 Refrigerate or freeze cooked leftovers in small, covered, shallow containers within 2 hours after cooking. Leave airspace around containers for quick chilling.

39 Cover and reheat leftovers thoroughly before serving (rolling boil for sauces, soups, gravies, "wet" foods; 165°F or all others).

40 Date packages of leftovers and use within safe period.

41 Don't taste leftovers to determine safety.

42 If in doubt, throw it out. Discard outdated, unsafe or questionable leftovers in garbage disposal or in tightly wrapped packages that cannot be consumed by people or animals.



The food handling practices described on this poster are important to prevent or control the "dinner plate" microbial contamination that causes foodborne illness. These food handling practices are under your control from the time you buy food through the use of leftovers. Safe food handling also prevents losses from food spoilage. The recommendations based on *A Margin of Safety: The HACCP Approach to Food Safety Education, Project Report*, FSIS-USDA June 1989.

For more information on microbial contamination, refer to: *Microorganisms and Food*, NCR Publication #447.

For specific questions about handling foods, preparing meats or poultry, or what to do if a refrigerator or freezer fails, contact: Extension home economists in county extension offices Toll-Free Meat and Poultry Hotline: 1-800-535-4555

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