

factsheet

Summer Barbecuing

Summer Barbecuing and the Risks of Food Poisoning



What are some of the concerns with barbecuing poultry and meat?

A major concern with handling and cooking raw meats and poultry is the risk of food-borne illness caused by bacteria such as Campylobacter, Salmonella and E.Coli 0157.

Why are these illnesses considered such a problem?

Campylobacter, Salmonella and E.Coli 0157 bacteria are found in the intestines of food animals, such as poultry, beef or pork. If the live bacteria are consumed, even in very small numbers, it can cause illness. Symptoms include nausea, vomiting (less likely with Campylobacter), cramps, diarrhea and fever. Salmonella will usually occur approximately 18 to 36 hours after eating while Campylobacter will take about 2 to 5 days and E.Coli can occur from 1 to 14 days. These bacteria will affect people of any age but can cause serious illness in the young, the elderly and those individuals with chronic illnesses or weakened immune systems.

Can the bacteria be washed off poultry and meats?

No, washing will not remove the bacteria from raw meats and poultry and is therefore not recommended **however** it is suggested that produce such as lettuce, fruits and the outside of melons be washed under cold water to remove dirt and reduce bacteria.

Can poultry and ground meats be served rare or partially cooked?

No, There is no midpoint! All poultry and ground meats must be cooked completely through and its juices are

clear. When barbecuing, there is a tendency to undercook ground meat and poultry. This becomes a great concern in the summer months as barbecuing is a popular summer activity. Never accept or eat undercooked poultry or ground meats.

Is it safe to eat rare steaks?

Yes, as long as it is a solid piece of beef, and has not been stuck full of holes with a fork. Bacteria on the surface of the steak is killed by the high temperatures reached during cooking. This, however, is not the case with ground meats as the bacteria are mixed throughout the meat during the grinding process.

How can I tell if poultry and meats are done to the right temperature?

The only way to ensure poultry and meats are cooked to a safe temperature is by using a metal probe-type thermometer that you can put into the center of the food to check if it is done. Poultry and meat must be cooked to the following internal temperatures to ensure safety:

Pork, Veal, Lamb	71°C (160°F)
Ground Meat	71°C (160°F)
Whole chicken/turkey	82°C (180°F)
Chicken/turkey pieces	74°C (165°F)
Ground Poultry	74°C (165°F)
Beef steaks/roasts	63°C (145°F) medium rare 71°C (160°F) medium 77°C (170°F) well done

Do I have to thaw poultry and meat before barbecuing?

No, frozen meats will cook but close attention must be paid to ensure even cooking throughout the meat. Previously thawed meats will cook more evenly. Frozen meats may also overcook on the outside, leaving the middle undercooked. Cooking frozen meats can add as much as 50 per cent to the cooking time. With frozen chicken and pieces, thawing is advised prior to cooking.

Can you pre-cook poultry and meat before putting them on the barbecue?

YES, it is especially recommended to pre-cook poultry in the oven or microwave, so long as you place it immediately on the barbecue to complete cooking. You should never partially cook meat or poultry for later use.

How do I thaw poultry and meat?

There are three basic ways to thaw:

- 1) in the refrigerator
- 2) in a watertight plastic bag in cold water
- 3) in the microwave, as long as it is then placed immediately on the grill

Does marinating mean it is safe to leave poultry and meat on the counter?

No, marinating tenderizes and adds flavour. However, meats must be kept in the refrigerator. Marinade that has been in contact with raw meat, fish or poultry should be discarded. To use marinade to baste poultry or meat during cooking (or serve as a sauce) save some before marinating.

What is cross contamination?

Cross contamination is the transfer of bacteria from one food to another. It is especially likely to occur when raw food such as meat or poultry comes into contact with ready-to-eat food such as cooked meat, poultry or salad. Never place cooked food on the same plate used to take the raw meat out to the barbecue. Only clean plates are to be used for cooked foods. Store raw meats on the lowest shelf of the refrigerator below cooked or ready-to-eat foods. Be especially careful to clean work surfaces such as cutting boards and counter tops that have come in contact with raw meat and poultry.

Why is hand washing important?

Food poisoning bacteria can contaminate the hands after having touched the raw meat and can then be

passed on by handling cooked foods, produce, rolls, etc. Bacteria can also be transferred by not washing hands after using the washroom. Always wash your hands with warm, soapy water for at least 20 seconds.

Is there a problem when the meat has been cooked?

While cooking destroys bacteria, new bacteria can be transferred onto the food and re-contaminate it. These grow rapidly at room temperature. Refrigerate uneaten poultry and meat promptly after cooking. Throw out any that have been left at room temperature for more than two hours (one hour in the hot summer).

What about holding the poultry and meat before or after cooking?

KEEP HOT FOODS HOT AND COLD FOODS COLD. All cold foods should be kept at 4°C (40°F) and hot foods should be kept at 60°C (140°F). Cooked food should be refrigerated within one hour of cooking during the warm summer months.

How important is cleaning?

Very important. Anything that raw poultry and meat have touched, such as cutting boards and utensils, must be thoroughly washed in warm, soapy water and sanitized in a solution of 1 ½ teaspoons of household bleach in one litre of water before being used again.

Are all barbecues the same for cooking?

Not necessarily. Charcoal briquets must be preheated until they are light grey in colour. Propane barbecues differ in intensity of heat, therefore the best way to know if meats are cooked is to check the meat itself and to use a meat thermometer to guarantee it is done.

For further information on food safety visit the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture Food Safety website at <http://novascotia.ca/agri/>