

You can keep it **SAFE**

Knowing how to handle meat and food the right way can help you “keep it safe” when it comes to buying, preparing and safely serving food for your family.

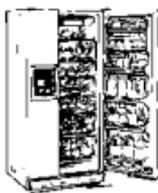
Here are some important tips to remember:



At the Store

Always buy your perishable foods last.

- Buy meat and food before the “use-by” date on the package.
- Make sure that meat and perishable foods are cold and that frozen foods are solid when you buy them.
- Don’t buy packages that are torn, cracked, dented or bulging.
- Take perishable foods home and refrigerate right away. Never leave food in a hot car.



At Home Storage

Make sure your refrigerator is at 40°F or below; your freezer should be set at 0°F.

- Keep your refrigerator at 40°F or below; freezer at 0°F.
- Put cold meat, poultry or fish in a plastic bag before refrigerating so it won’t drip on other refrigerated foods.
- Freeze meat, poultry or fish right away if you won’t use it within one or two days.



Getting Ready

Always wash hands before handling food or meat. Keep kitchen counter and utensils clean and neat.

- Wash hands with hot water and soap before and after handling meat or other food.
- Thaw foods in the refrigerator or microwave, not on the kitchen counter.
- If you use a microwave to thaw foods, cook them immediately.
- Cut meat, poultry and fish on a different cutting board than other fresh foods like vegetables.



Cooking

Follow the cooking directions and cook it right.

- Use a meat thermometer to determine when meat or poultry is properly cooked for best flavor.
- Use this guide to internal cooking temperatures to determine when meat or poultry is ready to serve:

Pork	
Chops, roasts	145°F
Ground	160°F
Beef, Veal, Lamb	
Roasts/steaks (med. rare to well-done)	145°-170°F
Ground	160°F
Poultry	
Whole, Breast, Ground	165°F



Serving

Always use clean dishes and utensils to serve your food and meat. Never leave cooked food out for more than 2 hours before or after you eat.

- Serve cooked food on a clean plate and use clean utensils. Never use the same unwashed plate that you used to thaw the meat to serve that food.
- Use separate utensils for each dish.
- Never leave cooked foods out on the table or counter for more than 2 hours.



Leftovers

Put leftovers in the refrigerator right away. When in doubt, throw it out. Better safe than sorry, any day.

- Put leftovers in the refrigerator or within 2 hours after serving.
- Reheat leftovers until steaming before serving.



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USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline 800-535-4555



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