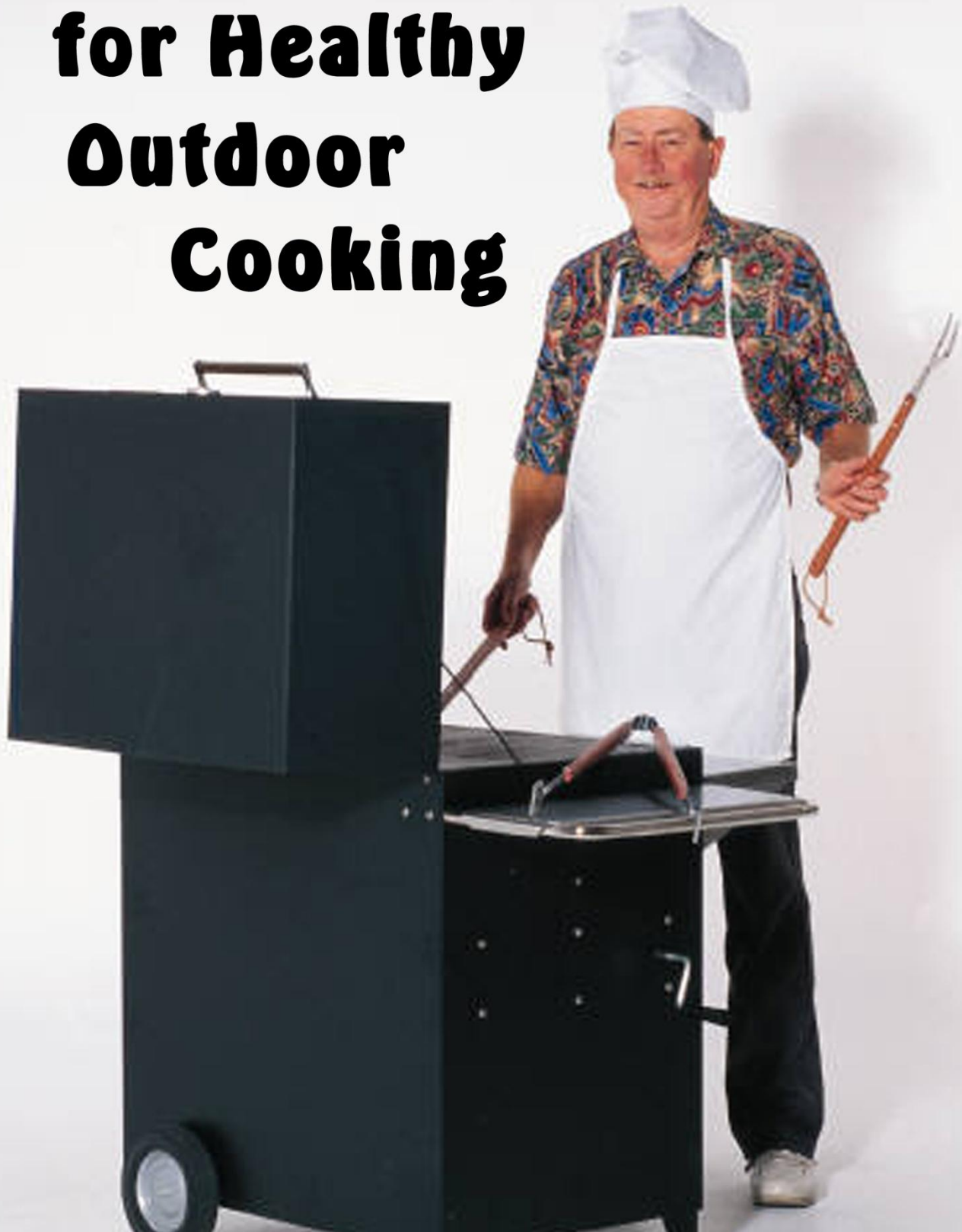


Food Safety for Healthy Outdoor Cooking



Handling, Cooking, and Storing Food Safely

Remember, you can't always see, smell, or taste the harmful bacteria that's responsible for food poisoning and other food related illnesses.

Follow these essential steps for proper food handling, cooking, and storage to prevent illness.

Basics

- * Cleanliness - Wash hands and surfaces often.
- * Keep Foods Separate - Don't cross-contaminate.
- * Cooking - Cook to proper temperatures.
- * Storage - Refrigerate promptly.

Shopping

- * Purchase refrigerated or frozen items after selecting your non-perishables.
- * Never choose meat or poultry in packaging that is torn or leaking.
- * Do not buy food past "Sell-By," "Use-By," or other expiration dates.

Storage

- * Always refrigerate perishable food within 2 hours
(1 hour when the temperature is above 90° F)
- * Check the temperature of your refrigerator and freezer with an appliance thermometer.
- * The refrigerator should be at 40 °F or below and the freezer at 0 °F or below.
- * Cook or freeze fresh poultry, fish, ground meats, and variety meats within 2 days.
- * Other beef, veal, lamb, or pork, should be cooked within 3 to 5 days.
- * Perishable food such as meat and poultry should be wrapped securely to maintain quality and to prevent meat juices from getting onto other food.
- * To maintain quality when freezing meat and poultry in its original package, wrap the package again with foil or plastic wrap that is recommended for the freezer.
- * In general, high-acid canned food such as tomatoes, grapefruit, and pineapple can be stored on the shelf for 12 to 18 months.
- * Lowacid canned food such as meat, poultry, fish, and most vegetables will keep 2 to 5 years provided that the can remains in good condition and has been stored in a cool, clean, and dry place.
- * Discard cans that are dented, leaking, bulging, or rusted.

Preparation

- * Always wash hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds before and after handling food.
- * Don't cross-contaminate: Keep raw meat, poultry, fish, and their juices away from other food.
- * After cutting raw meats, wash cutting board, utensils, and countertops with hot, soapy water.
- * Cutting boards, utensils, and countertops can be sanitized by using a solution of 1 Tbsp. of *unscented*, liquid chlorine bleach in 1 gallon of water.
- * Marinate meat and poultry in a covered dish in the refrigerator.

Thawing

- * Refrigerator: The refrigerator is the ideal method as it allows for slow, safe thawing.
- * Make sure thawing meat and poultry juices do not drip onto other food.
- * Cold Water: For faster thawing, place food in a leak-proof plastic bag. Submerge in cold tap water. Change the water every 30 minutes.
- * Cook immediately after thawing.
- * Microwave Thawing: Cook meat and poultry immediately after microwave thawing.

Cooking

- * Beef, veal, and lamb steaks, roasts, and chops: Internal temperature of 145 °F.
- * All cuts of pork must be cooked to reach an internal temperature of 160 °F.
- * Ground beef, veal and lamb to 160 °F.
- * All poultry should reach a safe minimum internal temperature of 165 °F.

Serving

- * Hot food should be held at 140 °F or warmer.
- * Cold food should be held at 40 °F or colder.
- * When serving food at a buffet, keep food hot with chafing dishes, slow cookers, and warming trays.
- * Keep food cold by nesting dishes in bowls of ice or use small serving dishes in bowls of ice or, use small serving trays and replace them often.
- * Perishable food should not be left out more than 2 hours at room temperature.
(*No longer than 1 hour when the temperature is above 90 °F*)

Leftovers

- * Discard any food left out at room temperature for more than 2 hours
(1 hour if the temperature was above 90 °F)
- * Place food into shallow containers and immediately put in the refrigerator or freezer for rapid cooling.
- * Use cooked leftovers within 4 days.

Re-freezing

- * Meat and poultry defrosted in the refrigerator may be re-frozen before or after cooking.
- * If thawed by other methods, cook before refreezing.

Cutting Boards and Food Safety

Which is better for avoiding cross-contamination: wood, or plastic cutting boards?

Consumers may choose either wood or a nonporous surface cutting board such as plastic, marble, glass, or pyroceramic. Nonporous surfaces are easier to clean than wood.

The Meat and Poultry Hotline says that consumers may use wood or a nonporous surface for cutting raw meat and poultry. However, consider using one cutting board for fresh produce and bread and a separate one for raw meat, poultry, and seafood. This will prevent bacteria on a cutting board that is used for raw meat, poultry, or seafood from contaminating a food that requires no further cooking.

Cleaning Cutting Boards

To keep all cutting boards clean, the Hotline recommends washing them with hot, soapy water after each use; then rinse with clear water and air dry or pat dry with clean paper towels. Nonporous acrylic, plastic, or glass boards and solid wood boards can be washed in a dishwasher (laminated boards may crack and split).

Both wooden and plastic cutting boards can be sanitized with a solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented, liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of water. Flood the surface with the bleach solution and allow it to stand for several minutes. Rinse with clear water and air dry or pat dry with clean paper towels.

Replace Worn Cutting Boards

All plastic and wooden cutting boards wear out over time. Once cutting boards become excessively worn or develop hard-to-clean grooves, they should be discarded and replaced.

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FSIS is the public health agency in the U.S. Department of Agriculture responsible for ensuring that the nation's commercial supply of meat, poultry, and egg products is safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled and packaged.

If you have a question about meat, poultry, or egg products you're invited to call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline toll free at: 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854)

The hotline is open year-round Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. ET

Recorded food safety messages are available in both English and Spanish 24 hours a day.

Visit the FSIS Web site at www.fsis.usda.gov for a wealth of information on Food Safety.

Send E-mail questions to MPHotline.fsis@usda.gov