



# Food Safety Information

## Grilling and Food Safety

*Cooking outdoors was once a summer only activity shared with family and friends. Now more than half of Americans say they are cooking outdoors year round. So whether the snow is blowing or the sun is shining, it's important to follow food safety guidelines to prevent harmful bacteria from causing foodborne illness. Use these simple guidelines for grilling food safely.*



### Keep Everything Clean

Be sure there are plenty of clean utensils and platters.

If you are grilling and eating away from home, find out if there is a source of clean water. If not, bring water for preparation and cleaning or pack clean cloths and moist towelettes for cleaning surfaces and hands.



### Separate Raw and Cooked Foods

To prevent foodborne illness, do not use the same platter, cutting board or utensils for raw and cooked foods. Harmful bacteria present in raw meat and poultry and their juices can contaminate cooked food.



### Cook Thoroughly

Cook food to a safe minimum internal temperature to destroy harmful bacteria. Meat and poultry cooked on a grill tends to brown quickly on the outside, so use a food thermometer to ensure the food has reached a safe minimum internal temperature. NEVER partially grill meat or poultry and finish cooking later.

#### MEATS

Cook all raw beef, pork, lamb and veal steaks, chops, and roasts to a minimum internal temperature of 145°F (63°C) as measured with a food thermometer. For safety and quality, allow meat to rest for at least 3 minutes before carving or consuming.

#### GROUND MEATS

All raw ground beef, pork, lamb, and veal should be cooked to an internal temperature of 160°F (71°C) as measured with a food thermometer.

#### POULTRY

Poultry should be cooked to a minimum internal temperature of 165°F (74°C) as measured with a food thermometer.

### Safe Minimum Internal Temperatures

Poultry (whole, pieces & ground)	165°F (74°C)
Ground meats	160°F (71°C)
Beef, pork, lamb and veal (steaks, roasts & chops)	145°F (63°C)

#### Safe Smoking

Smoking is cooking food indirectly in the presence of a fire. It can be done in a covered grill with a pan of water placed beneath the meat or poultry. Meats can also be smoked in a smoker — an outdoor cooker especially designed for smoking foods.

Smoking is done much more slowly than grilling, and as a result, the meat is tender and takes on a natural smoke flavoring. The temperature in the smoker should be maintained at 250 to 300°F (121 to 149°C) for safety.

Use a food thermometer to be sure the food has reached a safe internal temperature.

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### Pit Roasting

Pit roasting is cooking meat in a large, level hole dug in the ground. To do this, a fire, requiring wood equal to about two and a half times the volume of the pit, is built in the pit. The hardwood burns until it is reduced to burning coals.

Cooking may require 10 to 12 hours or more and is difficult to estimate. A food thermometer must be used to determine the meat or poultry's safety and doneness. There are many variables that affect cooking time such as outdoor temperature, the size and thickness of the item being cooked, and how fast the coals are heated.



### Keep Cold Food Cold

Keep meat and poultry refrigerated until ready to use. Only take out what will immediately be placed on the grill.

When using a cooler, keep it out of the direct sunlight by placing it in the shade or shelter. Avoid opening the lid too often, which lets cold air out and warm air in. Pack beverages in one cooler and perishables in a separate cooler.

### Keep Hot Food Hot

After cooking meat and poultry, keep it hot until served — at 140°F (60°C) or warmer. Keep cooked meats hot by setting them to the side of the grill rack, not directly over the coals where they could overcook. At home, the cooked meat can be kept hot in an oven set at approximately 200°F (93°C), in a chafing dish, slow cooker, or on a warming tray.

### Leftovers and Reheating

Refrigerate any leftovers promptly in shallow containers. Discard any food left out more than 2

hours (1 hour if temperature outside is above 90°F/32°C).

When reheating fully cooked meats like hot dogs or hamburgers, grill to 165°F (74°C) or until steaming hot.

## Food Safety Questions?

Call the **USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline** toll free at

**1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854)**

The hotline is open year-round and can be reached from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Eastern Time) Monday through Friday. Available in English and Spanish.



Send E-mail questions to [MPHotline@usda.gov](mailto:MPHotline@usda.gov)

Consumers with food safety questions can also "Ask Karen," the FSIS virtual representative. Available 24/7 at [AskKaren.gov](http://AskKaren.gov).



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June 2017