

HO 18.1 Food Safety Tips

Food safety is an important component of healthy eating. By keeping and preparing foods safely at home and being alert for unsafe food-handling practices when eating out, you will decrease your risk for food-borne illness. Be in control of the foods you eat!

Food Storage

- Always look for sell-by or expiration dates on perishable foods before you purchase them. If the food or beverage has expired or will be expiring soon, don't buy it.
- Keep a thermometer in your refrigerator at all times. Your refrigerator should stay at 40 degrees F (4 degrees Celsius) or cooler to slow the growth of most bacteria.
- Go to this site for a refrigerator and freezer storage chart: <https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/charts/storagetimes.html>. By following the recommended storage times, you'll decrease your risk for eating spoiled, and potentially dangerous, foods.

Food Handling

- Use smooth cutting boards made of hard, nonporous material, such as plastic. Disposable cutting boards are another option for quick, yet sanitary, clean-up.
- To prevent cross-contamination, after each use of a cutting board, wash with hot water, soap, and a scrub brush. Then sanitize with bleach or other commercial kitchen-cleaning agent.
- To prevent bacterial growth in your kitchen, be sure to clean your sink drain, disposal, and connecting pipe periodically with chlorine bleach or other commercial kitchen-cleaning agent.
- Foods should be thawed in the refrigerator, under cold running water, or in the microwave oven. Foods defrosted in the microwave oven should be cooked immediately after thawing.
- Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold! Leftover food should be refrigerated as soon as possible, or within two hours after cooking.

Cooking

- Buy a kitchen thermometer! Although you may have visual cues for determining whether foods are done (your hamburger is brown or gray inside), it is safest to measure temperatures.
- Go to <https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/charts/mintemp.html> for minimum safe cooking temperatures.
- Make sure that your eggs are cooked! Avoid eating raw dough or cake mix that contains eggs. Avoid eating runny fried eggs.

Eating Out

- Avoid raw or undercooked foods (meat, fish, poultry, eggs, sauces, dressing, and desserts) when eating out. Ask how foods are prepared and request that foods be cooked well done.
- Make sure buffet tables are clean and that foods are covered with a guard.

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- Hot foods should arrive at your table hot, whereas cold foods should be served cold.
- Take a look around the restaurant. Are the tables, floors, walls, and countertops clean? Are the staff using tongs and wearing gloves and hairnets? How do the restrooms look?