



Food Safety and Inspection Service

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News Release

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Kick Off Grilling Season with Food Safety in Mind

WASHINGTON, May 23, 2018 — For many Americans, the summer grilling and travel season begins this upcoming weekend. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) wants to make sure you and your family avoid food poisoning this summer. An estimated 128,000 Americans are hospitalized with food poisoning each year, but foodborne illnesses can be prevented during summer months by properly handling perishable foods during travel, and by using a food thermometer when grilling.

If you're traveling to your favorite grilling location in a local park, or simply grilling in your backyard, perishable food items, including raw meat and poultry, need to be handled safely before they hit the grill. Bacteria grow rapidly in warm temperatures, so perishable foods need to be kept at 40°F or below to reduce bacterial growth. Perishable foods that are held above 40°F for more than two hours should not be consumed. In hot weather (above 90°F), food should be discarded if it sits out for more than one hour.

The best way to keep food cold during the summer when you're away from home is to use a cooler. Consider packing beverages in one cooler and perishable food in another cooler. The beverage cooler may be opened frequently, causing the temperature inside of the cooler to fluctuate and become unsafe for perishable foods. Prevent juices from raw meat and poultry from cross-contaminating other items in your cooler by placing raw meats in waterproof containers before placing them in the cooler.

Ensure you have all the tools and utensils you may need for grilling before heading out to the grill. Grab these items to help ensure a safe grilling experience:

- Food thermometer
- Paper towels or moist towelettes
- Two sets of cooking utensils (tongs, spatulas, forks, etc.). Use the first set to handle raw items and the other for cooked foods.
- Plates or containers for cooked items. Never place cooked foods on the same plate or container that held raw meat or poultry.

Before eating any meat or poultry you have grilled, verify any potential illness-causing bacteria has been destroyed by using a food thermometer. Use the following safe internal temperature guidelines for your meat and poultry to ensure they are done:

- Beef, pork, lamb and veal (steaks, roasts and chops): 145°F with a three-minute rest time
- Ground meats: 160°F
- Whole poultry, poultry breasts and ground poultry: 165°F

Once finished, make sure all leftovers are refrigerated or put on ice within two hours after cooking, or one hour if the temperature is above 90°F. Leftovers should be consumed within three to four days when refrigerated.

Need more food safety information? Call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at (1-888-674-6854) Monday through Friday, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. ET, or email or chat at [AskKaren.gov](https://askkaren.gov).

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