



AUSTRALIAN FOOD SAFETY WEEK 2009

'SAFE FOOD – SMART AND GREAT VALUE'

FOOD POISONING IN AUSTRALIA

- There is an estimated 5.4 million cases of food poisoning each year in Australia, and with one fifth of these cases linked to practices in the home.
- Food poisoning is more than a minor inconvenience, in some cases it can make you really ill and even kill.
- We can still do a lot better simply by getting back to basics – clean, chill, cook and separate.

SMART SHOPPING AND COOKING

- If **buying in bulk** make sure you have adequate storage in the refrigerator or freezer, and enough time to repackage the food so that you can defrost an adequate amount for a meal, rather than attempting to thaw the entire purchase at once. Small food packages will defrost well in the refrigerator, while large blocks of meat or fish pose difficulties as the outside will be defrosted for a considerable time before the core of the product defrosts.
- Understand **best-before and use-by dates** particularly if you love a bargain, as foods near their use-by date will be on special, as it is illegal to sell them after the date, and the retailer is wanting to move them quickly. Ask yourself: Are you able to consume the food before it is past its use-by date? Is the product able to be frozen which will extend its safe life? If the answer to such questions is “No”, then resist the bargain temptation.”

The best-before date is slightly different as food can be sold and safely consumed after the date. The best-before date is nominated by the manufacturer as the date before which the food will be of best quality to consumer. After this date the food will decrease in quality, but will remain safe for a reasonable time.

- If using a **slow cookers** to make cheaper meat cuts tender, make sure it is not operating in the temperature danger zone between 5°C and 60°C as food poisoning bugs thrive in this zone.
- **Refrigerate or freeze** food as soon as it stops steaming – never leave it on the benchtop overnight. Splitting large amounts into meal size containers will help the food chill swiftly.
- Make sure to **separate** raw meats, chicken and fish from salad vegetables, fruit and other foods which will not be cooked before serving to avoid spoiling through cross-contamination.

RISK MANAGEMENT

- If you are cooking something new and adventurous, always follow cooking instructions on the packet or the recipe carefully. Also ask questions concerning storage and preparation from sellers and surf the web.
- Follow the basic food safety tips carefully CLEAN, COOK, CHILL, SEPARATE

CLEAN

- Ensure hands are absolutely clean: 20/20 rule - always make sure you wash your hands using soap and running water for 20 seconds and dry thoroughly on a clean towel for 20 seconds.
- Make sure your knives, other cooking utensils, chopping boards and kitchen benchtops are clean.
- Throw out cracked crockery, gouged chopping boards and chipped mugs. They're not heirlooms, just a great place for bacteria ridden sludge.

- Wash fruits and vegetables before eating.

COOK

- Raw meat may have bugs on it that can cause food poisoning if they're not killed before you eat the food.
- Solid pieces of meat, like steak or a whole roast will only have bugs on the outside surfaces. That means that when you cook them on the outside, the bugs will be killed. Because of this, it's safe to eat them when they're still pink or even red in the centre.
- Always cook chicken or other poultry, minced or boned meat, hamburger, stuffed meat and sausages right through until all juices are clear to make sure all bugs are killed.
- Defrost poultry and rolled and stuffed meat completely before cooking or else they may not cook right through. Defrost in the fridge or microwave.
- Always follow cooking instructions on packaged food.
- Reheat leftovers to steaming hot before eating.
- Never put cooked meat onto the same plate on which you had the raw meat without washing and drying it well. (Watch out for this mistake when barbecuing)

CHILL

- The number of bugs on food increases quickly at temperatures between 5° and 60° — the Temperature Danger Zone
- Keep your fridge at 5° or below.
- Keep all cooked food, vegetables, salads, dairy and similar food in the fridge.
- Refrigerate hot food as soon as it stops steaming – don't let it cool to room temperature on the bench top.
- Refrigerate leftovers promptly — don't leave the remains of your evening pizza on the bench overnight and then eat the rest for breakfast.
- If the fridge is too crowded, the cold air can't circulate properly. If you're having a party and your fridge is overloaded, do the unthinkable — take out the beer and wine. You can keep drinks cool by using Eskys or in the laundry tub packed with ice. This will not only leave more room in the fridge for the food, but will also mean the fridge gets opened less often and so stays colder.

SEPARATE

- Keep raw meat and poultry from touching other food.
- If the raw meat touches or drips on a food which will not be cooked before being eaten (like salad), the food will then have the bugs on it. The bugs on the meat will be killed when you cook it, but you'll eat the salad – bugs and all.
- Keep raw meat and poultry in the bottom of the fridge or, even better, in a sealed container, so it can't drip onto other food.
- Cover all stored food.

CHICKEN

The following information is supplied by the Australian Chicken Meat Federation, a Food Safety Information Council Member: www.chicken.org.au

Store your chicken carefully:

- Never store fresh chicken at room temperature for more than two hours (uncooked chicken meat should be stored in a refrigerator at a maximum temperature of 5°C)
- If you are storing chicken products for more than 2-3 days, chicken products should be frozen
- Thaw chicken in the fridge or the microwave – never on the bench

Raw meat juices can contain bacteria, so when handle meat keep this in mind to prevent bacteria spreading:

- Keep raw chicken away from other foods in the fridge AND during preparation, so raw chicken juices do not contact other food that will be eaten raw, such as fruits or vegetables

- Keep utensils used on raw meat – such as chopping boards and knives – away from other foods

As bacteria are destroyed easily by normal cooking:

- Cook chicken thoroughly, until it is no longer pink inside and when you pierce the deepest part of the meat the juices run clear