



Safe Summer Sizzle

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With the warm weather upon us, most of us are getting ready to fire up the grill, and eat outdoors. Although we all love the warm weather, the risk of contracting a food borne illness is increased due to the temperature increase. Primarily poor food handling and inadequate cooking temperatures are the cause of food borne illnesses. However this should not stop you from

heating up your barbeques or going on an outdoor adventure. Following some basic food safety guidelines can help minimize the risks of getting sick due to food this summer.



A wise saying to remember when preparing food is “keep cold foods cold and hot ones hot.” Avoid keeping foods in the dangerous temperature zone, by keeping cold foods at a temperature lower than 4° C and hot foods at a temperature greater than 60° C. Raw foods such as meat and poultry in particular should be kept chilled. This may be a difficult task if you are planning an outdoor adventure. Use a cooler loaded with ice packs to keep raw items as cool as possible. Avoid opening

the cooler too often to prevent it from warming up.

When preparing foods prevent cross contamination by separating raw foods from ready to eat or cooked food items. Keeping raw foods such as shellfish, poultry and meat away from already cooked or ready to eat items will help prevent the spread of food borne bacteria. When packaging food into the refrigerator or cooler, keep meat items in a separate container at the bottom of the cooler, to avoid any drippings onto already cooked or ready to eat foods. Ensuring a clean working surface and environment can also prevent cross contamination. Before preparing any food item wither at home or outdoors, thoroughly wash your hands. Wash counter tops, cutting boards and other utensils before and after use. Two cutting boards should be used, one for raw meats and the other for vegetables and fruits. Never place cooked items on the same surface as raw items.

Safe food handling is important at each step, whether it is thawing the meat, or storing leftovers for another day. Thawing can be done by keeping the item in the refrigerator in cold water or by using the microwave if it is going to be grilled immediately after. Thawing should be completely done before grilling to help the meat to cook evenly.

Cook raw meats to appropriate internal temperatures to kill common food borne bacteria such as E.coli. Because just looking at the product is not a good enough indicator whether the food is properly cooked, use a thermometer to ensure adequate cooking. Always check the temperature at the thickest part of the meat. For more information on safe internal temperatures check out *Food Safety at Health Canada*(<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/securit/kitchen-cuisine/barbecue-eng.php>).

Finally when storing the delicious leftovers for another day, throw out any food that has been left to sit out for more than 2 hours. Anything else can be placed in plastic containers and placed in the refrigerator to avoid the danger temperature zone of between 4° and 60 °C. If there is ever doubt of if a food is safe or not simply throw it out!

Do not forget to keep active and enjoy the great outdoors when the weather is nice. Enjoy a walk through a park with a friend, a fun family swim or solo run by the river. Whatever your activity choice have fun and do something daily to keep you in shape!