

Column Name- The Heartland Minute

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*“Grilling Season Food Safety”*

It's that time of year to be outside, throw some meat on the grill, kick back, and relax. This is a fun time of year! All the more reason to remember food safety needs to be a part of summer parties, especially when grilling outdoors is involved.

The important thing to start with is washing your hands. This should always be first step before you start handling any food, and then wash them again after you've handled any kind of raw meat. You should also always have a food thermometer close at hand. This leads us to three temperatures that you need to remember: 145 degrees Fahrenheit for steaks, roasts, chops, fish and other whole cuts of meat. 160 F for ground meat, including beef, pork and lamb. 165 F for all types of poultry. These temperatures are to include products that are smoked, cooked on a grill or indoors.

These temperatures pertain to the internal temperature that the meat should be at. Without a food thermometer, it's subjective as to whether the meat is cooked properly. Judging doneness by color or pressing the meat with your finger are also too subjective to be considered safe practices. To more accurately measure for doneness, insert the tip of the thermometer into the center of the meat. With a digital thermometer, the temperature sensor is normally in the tip, so those can be inserted into the top of the meat product. However, the ideal way to do it, with a hamburger for instance, is to insert it from the side. That is the best way to reach the center of the product.

You can also utilize a thermometer with a display. When looking on the stem of a dial face thermometer, there should be a dimple, about halfway up the stem. Insert this type of thermometer into the food so that the little dimple gets into the meat product to get an accurate measurement.

**Other food safety tips to consider:**

Keep meat cold until you're ready to use it. Resist the temptation to let meat sit on a counter for long periods of time. You can let it warm for about 30 minutes, but not hours. The longer it sits it invites any bacteria that could be on the meat to start growing, and cooking may not destroy all of the bacteria.

Freeze meat that won't be used soon after you buy it. Consider buying meat 2-3 days before cooking it. Frozen meat is best thawed in the refrigerator, not on a countertop. Steaks can typically be thawed in a refrigerator in 24 hours. A brisket might take 3-4 days.

Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. Cold foods should be kept at 40 F or lower, while hot foods should be kept at 140 F or higher.

Store food and eat leftovers promptly. Store food within 1-2 hours of serving them. Leftovers should be eaten within 3-4 days.

Don't blame the mayonnaise. Mayo often gets a bad rap for being a food safety concern, but the popular dressing is high in acid and can fend for itself. Mayo really isn't the problem, but actually what you mix into the mayo. Ingredients like cooked potatoes and hard-boiled eggs are those that need refrigeration to reduce food safety risks. So, cut the mayo some slack. It is there to just hold the mixture together and add flavor, while the other ingredients are the food safety risk.

Information comes from K-State food scientist, Karen Blakeslee.

For more information regarding Agriculture and Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, or K-State Research and Extension call the office at 620-583-7455, email me, Ben Sims, at [benjam63@ksu.edu](mailto:benjam63@ksu.edu), or stop by the office which is located inside the courthouse. Be sure to follow K-State Research and Extension- Greenwood County on Facebook for the most up-to-date information on Extension education programs and the Greenwood County 4-H program.