

Column Name- The Heartland Minute

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*“Easter Ham”*

Ham is a staple for many families’ Easter feast, but between all the varieties available, sometimes it can get confusing on how to safely prepare this holiday favorite. When you boil it down, you really have two types of hams to choose from: cooked/ready-to-eat, or uncooked.

Package labels will state if it is uncooked or ready-to-eat. So, as with many other food selections, always read the package label and instructions to be informed on how to safely handle the ham and prepare it for your friends and family.

#### Cooked Hams

Varieties of cooked ham include canned, vacuum packaged and spiral-cut cooked ham. Ready-to-eat ham may be called cooked. Ham that is not ready-to-eat but has the appearance of being so will bear a statement on the label indicating the product needs cooking. All cooked ham can be eaten cold, straight out of the package. If preferred hot, Karen Blakeslee, KSU food scientist, says ham should be heated to an internal temperature of 145 degrees Fahrenheit in an oven set at a minimum temperature of 325 F. If the ham has been repackaged in a location outside the processing plant, such as inside the grocery store deli, heat to an internal temperature of 165 F. Reheat any leftover cooked ham to 165 F, as well. Best way to do this is the utilization of a food thermometer. There are many cheap and efficient thermometers that can be found online for under \$15.

#### Uncooked Hams

Varieties of uncooked hams can include fresh, cured and smoked; with or without bone. As a reminder, be sure to read the label and follow instructions on the package. Some may look like they are ready-to-eat, but they are not and must be cooked thoroughly before eating. The package should contain directions on how to cook the ham, but for additional guidance the USDA offers an online timetable for cooking ham. That can be found at [www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/meat-fish/hams-and-food-safety#9](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/meat-fish/hams-and-food-safety#9). There is a minimum cooking temperature for all uncooked hams. Ham that requires cooking before consumption must reach an internal temperature of 145 F (with a 3-minute rest time), according to Blakeslee. Set the oven no lower than 325 F. The ham’s end quality can be affected by the type and size of uncooked hams. Cooking and resting time can differ significantly between varieties, total weight, and portion. So, for the perfectly cooked ham, check the USDA guidelines. Happy Easter, everyone!

Information comes from Kansas State University food scientist, Karen Blakeslee.

If you are looking for Family and Consumer Sciences programming through Extension, please consider liking our Greenwood County Extension Facebook page to follow along and learn more about upcoming programs. On April 12 in Eureka, we will be having a Food Preservation Workshop presented by K-State Food Safety Scientist, Karen Blakeslee. The cost to attend is \$30 with a lunch provided. Please contact the Extension office to register.