

## Food Safety Guidelines

### CLEANING

#### Wash hands well

Wash hands in warm, soapy water and dry them thoroughly:

- Before handling food
- Between handling raw foods (particularly meat, fish, poultry and eggs) and touching any other food or kitchen utensils.
- After handling raw foods; going to the toilet; handling rubbish bins or cat litter trays; coughing or sneezing; touching pets; or whenever hands look or feel dirty.

#### Wash and wipe

Clean kitchen surfaces after preparing foods:

- Try to 'clean as you go'; wipe up spills at once.
- Wash utensils – including chopping boards and knives - and surfaces thoroughly after preparing raw meat, fish, poultry and before contact with other food.
- Don't forget to wipe down sinks and taps and fridge and cooker door handles. Sweep and wash floors often.
- Clean the kitchen periodically - including the cupboards.

#### Put a lid on it

- If possible use a lidded bin and bin liner for kitchen rubbish. Empty bins often, especially in the summer.
- Clean bins out with hot water and disinfectant at regular intervals.

#### Do the dishes

- Wash all crockery and utensils after use with hot water and washing up liquid.
- Change the water regularly then rinse in clean, hot water.
- Where possible, drain dishes until dry.
- If you have a dishwasher, use the right amounts of salt and detergent and keep the filter clean.

### **Germ warfare**

- Have the right cleaning materials for the job and store them away from food.
- Use detergent (such as washing up liquid) to remove any grease and dirt, and then apply disinfectant to kill any remaining germs.
- Anti-bacterial sprays and bleach are types of disinfectant, but bleach is very powerful so use it sparingly.
- If using tea towels change them regularly and wash in a hot wash cycle. Preferably, use disposable cloths or paper towels.
- Have different cloths or sponges for separate tasks. Where practicable throw away after use, otherwise soak them overnight in a dilute bleach solution and rinse thoroughly.

### **CHILLING**

- Buy chilled and frozen foods last when shopping. Pack them together, ideally in a cool bag or cool box. Keep food away from hot spots – e.g. car heaters or the sun.

### **Fridge foods**

These foods belong in the fridge:

- Raw meats, fish, poultry, dairy products and eggs.
- Food with a 'use by' date or label that says 'keep refrigerated'.
- Ready-to-eat foods such as salads and desserts.
- Foods you have cooked but are not yet ready to eat.
- Never put open cans in the fridge. Store foods in separate covered containers.
- Cover dishes and open containers with foil or film. Don't re-use foil or film.

### **Keep fridge and freezers at the correct temperature**

- Keep the coldest part of the fridge at no more than +5 C and the freezer at -18 C. Check regularly.
- Keep your fridge/freezer in good working condition. Don't let it get overloaded or get iced up, defrost it when needed.

### **Thaw foods safely**

- Allow food enough time to thaw. Place it on the bottom shelf of the fridge in a container. Never re-freeze food once it has started to thaw.
- Only thaw food in the microwave if cooking it immediately and use only the defrost setting. Check food is fully defrosted before cooking/eating.
- Foods that will not be cooked or reheated after defrosting (e.g. cheesecake) should not be left out at room temperature for long periods of time.

### **Chill out time**

Don't put hot food directly into the fridge or freezer. Cool it down as fast as you can within two hours of cooking by:

- Stirring liquid foods/drinks.
- Dividing foods into smaller portions.
- Putting food in a wide dish and stand this in a shallow tray of cold water.
- Covering food and move it to a cooler area. When freezing home-cooked foods, use clean freezer bags, labelled with the date and type of food. Check food labels or recipe for storage times.

### **CROSS CONTAMINATION**

#### **Safe and separate**

- Keep raw meat, fish, poultry and other raw foods away from cooked foods and ready-to-eat foods (such as salads, bread and sandwiches).
- Store them well covered, on the bottom shelf of the fridge so they can't drip onto other foods.
- Never wash poultry before cooking— germs can easily splash from the meat onto kitchen surfaces.

### Use different dishes

- Never put cooked food on a dish which has held raw foods until it has been thoroughly washed.
- Where possible separate chopping boards for raw and cooked foods. If using a single chopping board, wash it well between uses.
- Do not use the same utensil to stir or serve a cooked meal that has touched the raw ingredients, unless it has been thoroughly washed.

### Handling food

- Use clean kitchen utensils not fingers for handling foods.
- Avoid preparing food for yourself or others if you are ill, especially with vomiting and/or diarrhoea.
- Cover all cuts, burns and sores with waterproof dressings and change these regularly – pay extra attention to any open wounds on hands or arms.
- If you are preparing food – take off your watch, rings and bracelets before you start.
- Don't cough or sneeze near food.
- Avoid touching your nose, teeth, ears and hair, or scratching when handling food

(Source: Adapted from Food Link Safety Programme, UK)

#### i.) Food Storage

**Fridge Storage** – some foods need to be kept in the fridge to help prevent bacteria growing. These include foods with a use by date, cooked foods and ready to eat foods such as desserts and cooked meats.

Top tips for fridge storage:

- Keep your fridge below 5 C / 40 F
- When preparing food, keep it out of the fridge for the shortest time possible
- Keep food refrigerated until you're ready to serve it
- Cool leftovers as quickly as possible (within 90 minutes) and store them in the fridge.  
Eat within 2 days

- Don't overload the shelves. Cool air needs to circulate freely around the food
- Never put open cans in the fridge as the metal can transfer to the cans contents. Transfer the contents into a storage container
- Raw meat should always be in the bottom part of the fridge, so that it won't contaminate cooked items.

**Use by Dates** – these appear on foods that go off quickly such as fish and meat products as well as freshly prepared salads. It is important to follow the storage instructions on the label and not to use any food or drink after the use by date. If the food can be frozen the life can be extended beyond the use by date but always make sure you follow the instructions on the pack – such as 'freeze on day of purchase', 'cook from frozen' or 'defrost thoroughly before use'

#### **Freezing Guidelines**

- The freezer should be -18 C / 0 F or lower
- Let foods cool down thoroughly before freezing them
- Be sure to date foods stored in the freezer as they lose quality as time goes on

#### **Defrosting Guidelines**

- Foods can be defrosted in the fridge. After food has been defrosted it should be safe to eat for up to two days
- When cooking defrosted food, always ensure it is hot all the way through
- The quickest way to defrost frozen food is to microwave it on the defrost setting. Food thawed in the microwave should be cooked or reheated immediately. This is because microwaves do not heat food evenly and allow bacteria to grow. Cooking the food straight away will kill the bacteria.

**(Source: The Grub Club, The World Cancer Research Fund)**