

Food Prep Guidelines

Keep It Clean

- [Wash your hands](#) with soap and running water for at least 20 seconds before, during, and after preparing food and before eating. Wash your hands after using the bathroom and touching pets.
- [Wash your cutting boards](#), dishes, utensils, and countertops with hot, soapy water or in the dishwasher after preparing each food item.

Separate Raw Meat From Other Foods

- [Separate](#) raw meat, chicken and other poultry, seafood, and eggs from foods that won't be cooked before eating, such as fruit, salad greens, deli salads, and bread.
 - Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs separate from other foods when shopping for groceries and in the refrigerator.
 - Use one cutting board, plate, or knife for raw meat, poultry, and seafood and a separate cutting board, plate, or knife for produce, bread, and other foods that won't be cooked.

Cook to a Safe Temperature

- Use a food thermometer to make sure foods are [cooked](#) to an internal temperature hot enough to kill germs. See attached chart.
- Follow recommended [microwave cooking instructions and standing times](#).
 - Cold spots—areas that are not completely cooked when microwaved—can provide a hiding place for germs.
 - Always follow cooking instructions and directions for standing time, which is the extra time food should rest to finish cooking.

Serve Foods Safely

- If preparing food in advance, divide cooked food into [shallow containers](#) and store in a refrigerator or freezer. Using shallow containers encourages rapid, even cooling.
- Keep hot foods hot at 140°F or warmer. Use slow cookers, chafing dishes, and warming trays to keep food hot on the buffet table.
- Keep cold foods cold at 40°F or below. Use small serving trays and replace often with fresh platters from the refrigerator, or place serving dishes in bowls of ice so they stay chilled.
- For picnics and other outdoor meals, keep cold food in a cooler filled with ice or frozen gel packs until just before serving.
- Catering or [getting food delivered](#)? Make sure food that is catered or delivered stays at a safe temperature.

The Two-Hour Rule

- Some foods will quickly become unsafe to eat if not refrigerated or frozen. This includes food like meat, poultry, seafood, dairy, cut fruit, some vegetables, and cooked leftovers.
- Throw away any of these perishable foods that have been left out for **2 hours** or more.
- Toss them after **1 hour** if they've been sitting out at temperatures above 90°F, such as food served at a picnic or outdoor gathering.

Store and Reheat Leftovers the Right Way

- Divide leftovers into [smaller portions](#) or pieces for faster cooling, place in shallow containers, and refrigerate or freeze.
- Leftover foods should be refrigerated at 40°F or below as soon as possible and within 2 hours of preparation. It's OK to put hot foods directly into the refrigerator in small portions.
- Leftovers should be reheated to at least 165°F before serving. This includes leftovers warmed up in the microwave.
- Learn how long food can be stored safely in the [refrigerator and freezer](#)

Safe Temperatures

• Food	Type	Internal Temperature (°F/°C)
Beef, bison, veal, goat, and lamb	Steaks, roasts, chops	145°F (63°C) Rest time: 3 minutes
	Ground meat and sausage	160°F (71°C)
Casseroles	Meat and meatless	165°F (74°C)
Chicken, turkey, and other poultry	All: whole bird, breasts, legs, thighs, wings, ground poultry, giblets, sausage, and stuffing inside poultry	165°F (74°C)
Eggs	Raw eggs	Cook until yolk and white are firm
	Egg dishes (such as frittata, quiche)	160°F (71°C)
	Casseroles (containing meat and poultry)	165°F (74°C)
Ham	Raw ham	145°F (63°C) Rest time: 3 minutes
	Precooked ham (to reheat)	165°F (74°C) Note: Reheat cooked hams packaged in USDA-inspected plants to 140°F (60°C)
Leftovers	Any type	165°F (74°C)
Pork	Steaks, roasts, chops	145°F (63°C) Rest time: 3 minutes
	Ground meat and sausage	160°F (71°C)
Rabbit and venison	Wild or farm-raised	160°F (71°C)
Seafood	Fish (whole or filet), such as salmon, tuna, tilapia, pollock, bass, cod, catfish, trout, etc.	145°F (63°C) or cook until flesh is no longer translucent and separates easily with a fork
	Shrimp, lobster, crab, and scallops	Cook until flesh is pearly or white, and opaque
	Clams, oysters, mussels	Cook until shells open during cooking