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Release: Stay Food Safe this July Fourth

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Stay Food Safe this July Fourth

WASHINGTON, July 1, 2020 – Many Americans will be celebrating the Fourth of July outdoors this year a little differently, with celebrations at home, including backyard barbecues and picnics perhaps with only your household. No matter how you're celebrating the Fourth of July, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) encourages you to make food safety and other public health recommendations a part of your celebration.

"Foodborne illness can increase during summer because of the warmer temperatures and extended time spent outside," said Dr. Mindy Brashears, the USDA's Under Secretary for Food Safety. "You may not be grilling at the park this year, but instead you may be grilling at home. As we celebrate this Fourth of July holiday, I encourage consumers to use food safety steps to reduce their risk of illness."

Follow these tips from USDA to ensure a food safe Fourth of July:

Don't Cross-Contaminate

Always keep raw meat and their juices from touching other foods. While grilling, avoid using the same utensils for cooked and ready-to-eat foods that were previously used with raw meat or poultry products. Wash and sanitize all surfaces and utensils after they touch raw items. A recent USDA survey showed that 34 percent of respondents do not follow an important step to use a different utensil to take food off the grill. Bring enough tools to keep your raw meat and poultry away from any cooked or ready-to-eat foods and have extra cleaning and sanitizing supplies ready for your surfaces, plates and utensils.

Use a Food Thermometer

Some grill masters may say they know their food is done just by looking at its color when it comes off the grill. That's not possible and shouldn't be relied upon. This is where a food thermometer comes in.

"More than 25 percent of burgers can turn brown inside before they are fully cooked," says FSIS Administrator Paul Kiecker. "Although your grilled foods may look done, foodborne illness causing germs are not killed until the safe internal temperature has been reached. Using a food thermometer is the only way to know your food is done and safe to eat."

The USDA recommended safe minimum internal temperatures are:

- Beef, pork, lamb and veal (steaks, roasts and chops): 145°F then rest for three-minutes
- Fish: 145°F
- Ground meats (beef, pork, lamb and veal): 160°F
- Whole poultry, poultry breasts and ground poultry: 165°F

Keep Foods at a Safe Temperature

Perishable food items should not be left outside for more than two hours, and only one hour if the temperature is at or above 90°F. Keep your food at or below 40°F, in coolers or containers with a cold source, such as ice or frozen gel packs. This includes any leftovers from the grill, cold salads and even cut fruits and vegetables. Leftovers should be refrigerated or placed back in the cooler within 2 hours of being placed outside (1 hour if temperatures are at or above 90°F). If you are not sure how long food has been sitting out, throw it out immediately.

If you have questions about these tips, or any other food safety topics, call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854) or chat live at ask.usda.gov from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday.

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