**Star-Spangled Grilling and Smoking Food Safety Practices Everyone Needs to Know**

**WASHINGTON, June 27, 2024** – On July Fourth, the aroma of barbecue will fill the air as the festivities bring together family and friends to celebrate with quintessential American cooking pastimes: grilling and smoking. Food is the biggest staple when it comes to celebrating Independence Day, aside from the fireworks. Whether you’re sizzling burgers on the grill or slow-cooking ribs in the smoker, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service is urging everyone to take food safety precautions during food preparations.

“Fourth of July is a great time to use the grill and smoker to cook delicious meats and poultry,” said Under Secretary for Food Safety Dr. Emilio Esteban. “Whichever method you use, reduce your risk of foodborne illness by using a food thermometer to measure the safe minimum internal temperature, and reduce cross-contamination by using separate utensils for raw and cooked meat and poultry.”

Here are grilling and smoking food safety tips to keep in mind during your celebratory cookout:

**Thaw meat or poultry first**. Smoking uses low temperatures to cook food, and frozen food would take too long to reach a safe internal temperature before bacteria can start to multiply. Frozen foods can be grilled safely, but they will take longer and may cook unevenly.

**Marinate in the refrigerator.** Marinating tenderizes and flavors meat and poultry before grilling and smoking. Always marinate in the refrigerator and NOT on the counter. If basting meat and poultry during grilling or smoking, and you want to use some of the marinade as a sauce, you should put aside a portion of the marinade that has not been in contact with the raw meat or poultry. If using a marinade that has already been used on raw meat or poultry, boil first to destroy harmful bacteria.

**Keep raw meat and poultry separate.** Use different cutting boards and utensils for raw meats and poultry and food that is fully cooked or is ready to eat to avoid cross-contamination with bacteria.

**Keep the smoker and grill at a safe temperature**. If you are using a smoker or grill to smoke meats, you will need two types of thermometers: one for the food to determine safe internal temperature and an oven-safe thermometer to monitor that the air temperature in the smoker or grill stays between 225 and 300 F throughout the cooking process.

**Cook meats to a safe internal temperature as measured by a food thermometer.**

* Cook all raw beef, pork, lamb and veal steaks, chops, and roasts to a minimum internal temperature of 145 F before removing meat from the heat source. For safety and quality, allow meat to rest for at least three minutes before carving or consuming.
* Cook all raw ground beef, pork, lamb, and veal to an internal temperature of 160 F.
* Cook all poultry to a safe minimum internal temperature of 165 F.

If you have food safety questions, call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854), email [MPHotline@usda.gov](mailto:MPHotline@usda.gov) or chat live at [www.ask.usda.gov](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fask.usda.gov%2Fs%2F&data=04%7C01%7C%7C5e261632ab2d4d4af52608d9e28668a9%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637789889172321557%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=z8opm%2Bu4zcovV8zRYnb2bPv5OY90bFAWEx5scPtQMqQ%3D&reserved=0) 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday.

Access news releases and other information at USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service’s (FSIS) website at [www.fsis.usda.gov/newsroom](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/newsroom). Follow FSIS on X at [@usdafoodsafety](https://twitter.com/USDAFoodSafety) or in Spanish at X [@usdafoodsafety\_es](https://twitter.com/USDAFoodSafe_es) and USDA on Instagram at [@usdagov](https://www.instagram.com/usdagov/?hl=en) and [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/USDA/).

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