How do you avoid food poisoning?

With one million of us in the UK getting a bout of food poisoning each year, it seems we are right to be careful about what we eat.

But once you are aware of a few food safety basics about cooking, storing and reheating food, you can be confident about when food is safe to eat, and when to throw it away.

Food safety rules

Don't wash **raw chicken**

Do wash with soap after touching **raw meat**

Chicken, pork, burgers and sausages must be **cooked through**

Do set the **fridge** to 0-5C

Do **defrost** food in the fridge

Do **reheat** food thoroughly and stir halfway

Don't eat food after the **'use by'** date

How to cook chicken safely

A bacteria called campylobacter, found in raw chicken, causes 280,000 cases of food poisoning every year in the UK. That's more than E.coli, listeria and salmonella added together.

1. Cook it through

To kill the campylobacter bacteria, chicken must be cooked right through to the middle. Cut into the deepest part of the chicken and check that there is no pink meat. You should also check that the juices are clear, not pink. If it's not ready, cook it for longer then check again.

2. Keep it cool

Always keep chicken in the fridge, and avoid raw chicken coming into contact with other food. Be sure to wash your hands, knives and chopping boards with soap and hot water after handling raw chicken.

3. Get tech

Meat thermometers can be used to check the temperature in the centre of the food.

To check chicken is cooked through, pierce the thickest part with a skewer and make sure the juices run clear.

They're easy to use, and you can pick one up for well under £10. The accepted guidelines are that burgers and sausages should reach 71C, and chicken should reach a slightly higher 74C.
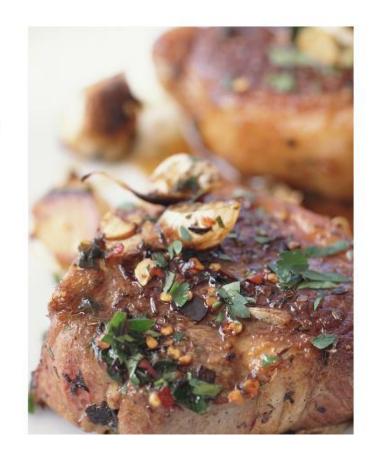
When is rare meat safe?

Beef

Cuts of beef have a dense texture that bacteria can't usually penetrate. This is why you can eat rare steaks. But the outside of the meat does need to be well cooked to kill surface bacteria.

Raw beef, including steak tartare, is safe to eat, but only when it has been handled within food safety guidelines.

Pork

Pork should always be cooked right through.

Check the centre by cutting into the meat. If it is still pink continue cooking, wash the knife, then check again.

Burgers

When making burgers at home, always cook them right through to the centre.

There are food outlets that offer rare burgers. This is possible in special circumstances, by following special food safety practices at all points from the supply chain to the restaurant.

Sausages

Sausages, meatballs, burgers and other processed meats must not be eaten pink.

That's because surface bacteria have been mixed in during mincing and processing. They must be fully cooked through to the centre.

If in doubt, use a meat thermometer to check the food reaches 71C in the centre.

When is it safe to reheat leftovers?

The Food Standards Agency recommends we only reheat food once. Heating food thoroughly to 74C all the way through kills the bacteria, making it safer to eat.

Microwaves can leave cold spots unless the food is mixed halfway through heating. Cold spots mean the bacteria are still present.

Reheating rice

Rice carries an extra risk because of a bacteria called bacillus cereus. It produces a toxin that is not destroyed by heat. So while reheating rice kills the bacteria, it does not remove the toxin.

To reduce the risks, put cooked rice in the fridge as soon as it's cool, and only reheat it once.

Keep a cool fridge

Keep your fridge within the safe range (between 0C and 5C). Don't put warm food into the fridge as it can quickly raise the temperature to unsafe levels. Wait until food has cooled to room temperature before you put it in the fridge.

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