Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program

A joint project of Texas AgriLife Extension,

Texas Department of Human Services,

Fall Fun Food

September 2015

Swisher County
310 West Broadway
Tulia, Texas 79088

September is National Food Safety Education Month!

Food Safety Myths Exposed

We all do our best to serve our families food that's safe and healthy, but some common myths about food safety might surprise you.

Myth #1: Food poisoning isn't that big of a deal. I just have to tough it out for a day or two and then it's over.
Fact: Many people don't know it, but some foodborne illnesses can actually lead to long-term health conditions, and 3,000 Americans a year die from foodborne illness. Get the facts on long-term effect of food poisoning.

Myth #2: It's OK to thaw meat on the counter. Since it starts out frozen, bacteria isn't really a problem.
Fact: Actually, bacteria grow surprisingly rapidly at room temperatures, so the counter is never a place you should thaw foods. Instead, thaw foods in the refrigerator or in a bag in water bath.

Myth #3: When cleaning my kitchen, the more bleach I use, the better. More bleach kills more bacteria, so it's safer for my family.
Fact: There is actually no advantage to using more bleach than needed. To clean kitchen surfaces effectively, use just one teaspoon of liquid, unscented bleach to one quart of water.

Myth #4: I don't need to wash fruits or vegetables if I'm going to peel them.
Fact: Because it's easy to transfer bacteria from the peel or rind you're cutting to the inside of your fruits and veggies, it's important to wash all produce, even if you plan to peel it.

Myth #5: To get rid of any bacteria on my meat, poultry, or seafood, I should rinse off the juices with water first.
Fact: Actually, rinsing meat, poultry, or seafood with water can increase your chance of food poisoning by splashing juices (and any bacteria they might contain) onto your sink and counters. The best way to cook meat, poultry, or seafood safely is to make sure you cook it to the right temperature.

Myth #6: The only reason to let food sit after it's been microwaved is to make sure you don't burn yourself on food that's too hot.
Fact: In fact, letting microwaved food sit for a few minutes ("standing time") helps your food cook more completely by allowing colder areas of food time to absorb heat from hotter areas of food.

Myth #7: Leftovers are safe to eat until they smell bad.
Fact: The kinds of bacteria that cause food poisoning do not affect the look, smell, or taste of food. To be safe, use our Safe Storage Times chart to make sure you know the right time to throw food out.

Myth #8: Once food has been cooked, all the bacteria have been killed, so I don't need to worry once it's "done."
Fact: Actually the possibility of bacterial growth actually increases after cooking, because the drop in temperature allows bacteria to thrive. This is why keeping cooked food warmed to the right temperature is critical for food safety.

Myth #9: Marinades are acidic, which kills bacteria—so it's OK to marinate foods on the counter.
Fact: Even in the presence of acidic marinade, bacteria can grow very rapidly at room temperatures. To marinate foods safely, it's important to marinate them in the refrigerator.

Myth #10: If I really want my produce to be safe, I should wash fruits and veggies with soap or detergent before I use them.
Fact: In fact, it's best not to use soaps or detergents on produce, since these products can linger on foods and are not safe for consumption. Using clean running water is actually the best way to remove bacteria and wash produce safely.

General Canning Information
For Safety's Sake

Pressure canning is the only recommended method for canning meat, poultry, seafood, and vege-tables. The bacterium *Clostridium botulinum* is destroyed in low-acid foods when they are processed at the correct time and pressure in pressure canners. Using boiling water canners for these foods poses a real risk of botulism poisoning.

If *Clostridium botulinum* bacteria survive and grow inside a sealed jar of food, they can pro-duce a poisonous toxin. Even a taste of food containing this toxin can be fatal. Boiling food 10 minutes at altitudes below 1,000 feet altitude should destroy this poison when it is present. For altitudes at and above 1,000 feet, add 1 additional minute per 1,000 feet additional elevation. Boiling means that you are able to see the liquid in the food actively forming large foamy bubbles that break all over the surface. Note that as of July 2013 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendation is to discard any home canned food that might contain botulism toxin. (http://www.cdc.gov/features/homecanning/)

Caution: To prevent the risk of botulism, low-acid and tomato foods not canned according to the recommendations in the USDA *Complete Guide to Home Canning* (2009rev) or according to other USDA-endorsed recom-mendations should be boiled as above, in a saucepan before consuming, even if you detect no signs of spoilage.

This is not intended to serve as a recommendation for consuming foods known to be significantly under-processed according to current standards and recommended methods. It is not a guarantee that all possible defects and hazards with other methods can be overcome by this boiling process.
The recommendation is to only can low-acid foods and tomatoes and tomato products according to the procedures in the USDA *Complete Guide to Home Canning* (2009) (which are the ones found in the How Do I?... menus on this website.) There are other pickles, relishes and salsas containing tomatoes that are acceptable and those we can support at the National Center are on our website.

All low-acid foods canned according to the approved recommendations may be eaten without boiling them when you are sure of all the following:

- Food was processed in a pressure canner operated according to the procedures in the USDA guidelines.
- The gauge of the pressure canner was accurate.
- Up-to-date researched process times and pressures were used for the size of jar, style of pack, and kind of food being canned.
- The process time and pressure recommended for sterilizing the food at your altitude was followed.
- The jar lid is firmly sealed and indicates a vacuum seal is present.
- Nothing has leaked from jar.
- No liquid spurts out when jar is opened.
- No unnatural or "off" odors can be detected. No mold is present.

This document was extracted from the "Complete Guide to Home Canning," Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 539, USDA (Revised 2009).

Causes of Food Poisoning

Each year, millions of people in the United States get sick from contaminated food. Symptoms of food poisoning include upset stomach, abdominal cramps, nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, fever, and dehydration. Symptoms may range from mild to severe.

Bacteria and Viruses Bacteria and viruses are the most common cause of food poisoning. The symptoms and severity of food poisoning vary, depending on which bacteria or virus has contaminated the food.

Parasites Parasites are organisms that derive nourishment and protection from other living organisms known as hosts. In the United States, the most common foodborne parasites are protozoa, roundworms, and tapeworms.

Mold, Toxins, and Contaminants Most food poisoning is caused by bacteria, viruses, and parasites rather than toxic substances in the food. But, some cases of food poisoning can be linked to either natural toxins or chemical toxins.

Allergens Food allergy is an abnormal response to a food triggered by your body's immune system. Some foods, such as nuts, milk, eggs, or seafood, can cause allergic reactions in people with food allergies.

Long Term Effects- One in six Americans will get sick from food poisoning this year. That's about 48 million people. Most of them will recover without any lasting effects from their illness. For some, however, the effects can be devastating and even deadly.

What Government Does

The food industry is responsible for producing safe food. Government agencies are responsible for setting food safety standards, conducting inspections, ensuring that standards are met, and maintaining a strong enforcement program to deal with those who do not comply with standards.

Safeguarding your home against foodborne illnesses begins not at home, but at the supermarket, grocery store, or any other place where you buy food that you plan to store and serve.

Fall Fun Food Facts Newsletter is produced by the Swisher County Office of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

Sincerely,

Calley Runnels

Calley Runnels
CEA-FCS Swisher County

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
MONTHLY Educational Programs

PROGRAM
Car Seat Class
Wednesday
September 23 & 30, 2015
Safe Riders Car Seat Distribution Program
at 2:00 p.m. in Annex Meeting Room
Pre-Registration Required
Call 995-3726