



Alice Henneman, MS, RDN • ahenneman@unl.edu • food.unl.edu

Restaurants must pass regular food safety inspections to stay open. Would YOUR kitchen pass a food safety inspection?

In the United States, the “Food Code”—developed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)—serves as a model to help health jurisdictions

nationwide develop food service food safety standards.

For consumers, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Centers for Disease Control Prevention (CDC) and FDA work together to provide food safety guidelines for use in the home. **NOTE: Consumer guidelines sometimes differ slightly from restaurant guidelines due to such factors as differences in home and professional equipment.**



DIRECTIONS: With these guidelines in mind, let's see if your kitchen would measure up! Choose the answers that most closely apply to YOUR everyday practices in your kitchen. Then compare your answers with the desired practices according to government guidelines for consumers.

1. How long do you leave perishable foods at room temperature? (Examples include meat, poultry, seafood, dairy products and cooked leftovers.)

- a) 2 or less hours
- b) No more than 6 hours
- c) I haven't paid attention to how much time they are at room temperature

2. What is the temperature of your home refrigerator?

- a) 50°F
- b) 40°F or below
- c) I don't know

3. How do you thaw meat, poultry and seafood?

- a) On the kitchen counter
- b) In the refrigerator
- c) In the microwave

4. How many days do you usually store perishable leftovers in the refrigerator?

- a) 3 to 4 days
- b) A week or more
- c) My leftovers usually spoil before I get around to eating them

5. When using a cutting board: If you're cutting raw meat or poultry, what do you do before cutting fresh produce or bread before the same meal?

- a) Use a separate cutting board
- b) Wipe the cutting board with a damp cloth or sponge
- c) Wash the cutting board with hot, soapy water, rinse with clear water and air dry or pat dry with clean paper towels

6. How do you determine whether you have cooked meat, poultry and seafood to a safe temperature?

- a) Cut into it to see if the juices run clear
- b) Check if it is no longer pink in the middle
- c) Use a food thermometer

7. Which of these describes your handwashing when working with food?

- a) I wash my hands before preparing food
- b) I wash my hands before, during and after preparing food
- c) I don't wash my hands during food preparation

8. When cooking raw poultry/meat, what do you do?

- a) Wash poultry and meat under running water before cooking them
- b) Give poultry and meat a quick dunk in a sink or large pan filled with cold water before cooking them
- c) Cook poultry and meat without washing them

9. Before eating melons, what do you do first?

- a) Cut melons open and examine how they look
- b) Wash melons thoroughly under running water before cutting into them
- c) Wash melons with soap and water before cutting into them

Answers to Food Safety Inspection Questions

1. a) Two or less hours: Illness-causing bacteria can grow in perishable foods within two hours unless refrigerated—and within one hour if the temperature is 90°F or higher. Divide leftovers into clean, shallow containers so they chill faster and refrigerate within two hours. Refrigerate within one hour when the temperature is 90°F or above.

2. b) 40°F or below: Your refrigerator should be between 40°F and 32°F. Your freezer should be at 0°F. Use an appliance thermometer to assure your refrigerator and freezer are cold enough. NOTE: Freezing doesn't destroy bacteria but keeps them from growing in food products until you cook the food. Quality should remain high for most frozen foods for 3 - 6 months.

For specific food items and to learn if they might stay fresh longer, see the *FoodKeeper* app developed by USDA, Cornell University and the Food Marketing Institute: www.foodsafety.gov/keep/foodkeeperapp. Access the app through your web browser; it is also available as a mobile app for Android and Apple devices. While the quality of food decreases the longer food is in a freezer, it will be safe indefinitely when stored at 0°F.

3. b) In the refrigerator or c) In the microwave:

Thawing meat, poultry and seafood in the **refrigerator** is the safest way as foods remain at a safe, constant temperature of 40°F or lower. Place the food on a plate or pan that can catch any juices that may leak. Normally, smaller amounts of most foods will be ready to use the next day. A large frozen item, like a turkey may require at least 24 hours for every 5 pounds of weight to thaw.

Foods can be thawed in the **microwave**, according to the directions in your owner's manual. Cook immediately as bacteria begin to grow as the food is warmed. **Cold water thawing** is faster than refrigerator thawing but requires more attention. Place the food in a leak-proof package or bag and submerge in cold tap water; change the water every 30 minutes. A 1-pound package may thaw in an hour or less; 3- to 4-pound packages may take 2 to 3 hours; and a turkey may take about 30 minutes per pound. As with microwave-thawed food, cook immediately.

4. a) 3 to 4 days: Use refrigerated, perishable leftovers within 3 to 4 days or freeze them in airtight freezer-quality packaging or storage containers. Frozen leftovers are at best quality for about 3 to 4 months; however, they will be safe indefinitely at 0°F.

5. a) Use a separate cutting board or c) Wash the cutting board with hot, soapy water, rinse with clear water and air dry or pat dry with clean paper towels: USDA suggests consumers use one cutting board for fresh produce and bread and another for raw meat, poultry and seafood to help assure food safety. Nonporous acrylic, plastic, glass and solid wood boards can be washed in a dishwasher unless the manufacturer recommends

otherwise. Replace cutting boards if they become excessively worn or develop hard-to-clean grooves.

6. c) Use a food thermometer: You can't tell whether meat, poultry or seafood is safely cooked by looking at it. They can be pink even when they have reached a safe internal temperature. You can't count on a food being at a desirable end temperature when the juices run clear; for example, a turkey may be overcooked by the time the juices run clear. USDA recommends these temperatures:

Product	Minimum Internal Temperature
Beef, pork, veal & lamb (steaks, chops, roasts)	145°F (62.8 °C) and allow to rest for at least 3 minutes
Ground meats	160°F (71.1 °C)
All poultry (breasts, whole bird, legs, thighs, wings, ground poultry, and stuffing)	165°F (73.9 °C)
Fish & shellfish	145°F (62.8 °C)

7. b) I wash my hands before, during and after preparing food: Here's how to do it according to Foodsafety.gov: (1) Wet your hands with warm or cold running water and apply soap. According to FDA, you should use plain soap and water—skip the antibacterial soap. (2) Rub your hands together to make a lather and scrub them well. Be sure to scrub the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails. Bacteria can hide out here too! (3) Continue rubbing hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum "Happy Birthday" from beginning to end twice. (4) Rinse your hands well under running water. (*When possible, use a paper towel or your elbow to turn off the faucet.*)

8. c) Cook poultry and meat without washing them: Washing raw meat and poultry can help bacteria spread. Their juices can splash onto and contaminate your sink and countertops.

9. b) Wash melons thoroughly under running water before cutting into them: Wash fruits and vegetables such as melons and oranges even if you plan to remove their peel. Bacteria can spread from the outside to the inside when they are cut or peeled. Suggestions for washing any type of produce include: (1) Rinse produce thoroughly under running water. Washing fruits and vegetables with soap, detergent, bleach or commercial produce washes is not recommended. (2) Scrub firm produce, such as melons and cucumbers, with a clean produce brush. (3) Dry produce with a clean paper or cloth towel to further reduce any surface bacteria.

(References at <http://bit.ly/home-food-safety-inspection>)