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How Can I Keep My Kitchen Safe From Harmful Bacteria? Part 3

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A weekly question/answer column

How Can I Keep My Kitchen Safe From Harmful Bacteria?

Charlotte Brennand* answers:

(Third in a four-part series on food safety in the kitchen— COOK)

Food safety experts agree that foods are properly cooked when they are heated for a long enough time and at a high enough temperature to kill the harmful bacteria that cause food-borne illness. Here are some tips to assure your foods are cooked to proper temperatures.

- Use a clean thermometer, which measures the internal temperature of cooked foods, to make sure meat, poultry, casseroles and other foods are cooked all the way through.
- Cook roasts and steaks to at least 145 degrees F. Whole poultry should be cooked to 180 degrees F for doneness.
- Cook ground beef, where bacteria can spread during processing, to at least 160 degrees F. Information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) links eating undercooked, pink ground beef with a higher risk of illness. If a thermometer is not available, do not eat ground beef that is still pink inside.
- Cook eggs until the yoke and white are firm. Recipes in which eggs remain raw or only partially cooked may not be safe.
- Fish should be opaque and flake easily with a fork.
- When cooking in a microwave oven, make sure there are no cold spots in food where bacteria can survive. For best results, cover food, stir and rotate for even cooking. If there is no turntable, rotate the dish by hand once or twice during cooking.
- Bring sauces, soups and gravies to a boil when reheating. Heat other leftovers thoroughly to at least 165 degrees F.

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