



Lewis County

Master Food Preservers

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

Food Safety and Preservation



The Heritage Farm
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HAMBURGER SAFETY TIPS

At the store, be sure to choose a package that's not torn and that feels cold. If possible, enclose it in a plastic bag so juices won't drip on other foods. Make ground beef and other perishables your final purchase of the trip.

After leaving the store, get perishables home quickly and refrigerated or freeze them immediately. If the trip home is more than an hour, pack them in an ice chest.

When handling raw ground beef, don't let its juices contaminate foods that won't be cooked. Wash your hands with soap and hot water before and after handling ground beef to make sure you don't spread bacteria from one surface to another.

Don't reuse any packaging materials. Use soap and hot water to wash utensils and surfaces which have come into contact with the raw meat. When taking hamburgers off the grill, don't put the cooked hamburgers on the same platter which held the raw patties.

STORING GROUND BEEF

Bacteria multiply rapidly in the "danger zone" between 40°F and 140°F. To keep bacterial levels low, store ground beef at 40°F and use or freeze it within two days. Ground beef kept frozen at 0°F will maintain its quality up to four months.

DEFROSTING AND COOKING HAMBURGERS SAFELY

Keeping meat cold while it is defrosting is essential to prevent the growth of bacteria. Never leave ground beef, or any perishable foods, out on the counter for more than two hours. Thaw it in the refrigerator.

To be sure bacteria are destroyed, cook hamburgers to 160°F (medium doneness) or until the center is no longer pink and the juices are clear.

When cooking out, do not partially grill extra hamburgers to use later. Once you begin cooking hamburgers by any method, cook them until completely done to assure that bacteria are destroyed.

Refrigerate hamburgers promptly after cooking. Any left out at room temperature for more than 2 hours should be discarded. After cooking, ground beef can be stored in the refrigerator for three to four days or frozen up to three months.

When reheating fully cooked patties, be sure their internal temperature reaches 165°F or they are hot and steaming.

At restaurants, order your hamburger to “medium” or “well done” and check for doneness when it is served.

SAFE FOOD HANDLING PRACTICES WHICH SHOULD BE EMPHASIZED IN ORDER TO REDUCE INCIDENCE OF FOODBORNE ILLNESS INCLUDE:

- NEVER DRINK raw milk. Use pasteurized milk.
- AFTER SHOPPING, quickly freeze or refrigerate perishable foods.
- NEVER THAW food on the counter or let it sit out of the refrigerator over 2 hours.
- USE refrigerated poultry, ground meat and patties in 1-2 days.
- WASH hands, utensils and work areas with hot soapy water after contact with raw poultry, meat, and meat patties.
- Follow rules of PERSONAL HYGIENE, washing hands well, especially after bathroom use or after diapering of infants.
- COOK poultry, pork, and ground meats until the center is gray or brown. Juices should run clear with no trace of pink. Cook fish until it flakes and loses its translucent (raw) appearance.
- If rare or medium rare beef is desired, roasts and steaks are much lower risk than ground beef.
- All meat, poultry, and fish served to persons at high risk of food-borne illnesses (elderly, immune-compromised and young children) should be thoroughly cooked.
- If eating out, SEND BACK any meat, poultry, or fish product that does not appear thoroughly cooked.
- Serve cooked food with clean plates and utensils.
- MICROWAVE carefully. If the oven is a lower wattage than what is shown in the instructions, cook food longer or at a higher setting. Cover and rotate food for even cooking. Let food stand outside the oven after cooking if so directed. The food will finish cooking as it stands.