



It's easy to beat those bugs

All you need to do is keep in mind a few simple facts when handling food:

CHOOSING FOOD



- Always look out for a 'use by' date on the label. The 'use by' is the date that perishable foods can be used up to, provided they have been stored according to the manufacturer's instructions. This is not to be confused with the 'best before' date which indicates the quality of the food. It's okay to eat food after a 'best before' date but NEVER eat food after its 'use by' date.
- Avoid foods made from unpasteurised milk such as some soft cheeses as these can contain harmful bacteria.
- Pack your raw meat, fish and poultry separately from other foods to prevent raw meat juices contaminating other foods.
- Don't leave food in a hot car and use a cool bag to carry chilled food especially in warm weather.

COOKING



- Cook all foods until they are piping hot all the way through. Follow recipes and label instructions carefully especially advice on cooking times and temperatures.
- Look out for pink meat. When cooking poultry, pork, burgers, sausages, rolled joints, kebabs and offal there should be no pink meat left and the juices should run clear.
- Lamb and beef (except when minced or rolled) can be rare in the middle as long as the outer surface is thoroughly cooked.

CHILLING AND STORAGE



- Keep your fridge at 5°C or below. It's a good idea to use a fridge thermometer so you can check it's operating correctly. Also, be careful not to overload your fridge as this can prevent circulation of cool air which means that food may not be kept cold enough.
- Special care should be taken to follow the storage instructions on the food label especially with regard to how long food can be kept once opened. For example, with many perishable foods such as cooked ham, the instructions often advise to eat the food within 2 days of opening the packet, even though the 'use by' date may be after this. This is because once the packet has been opened storage gases added to keep the food fresh will be lost and germs may get in and contaminate the food.

- If you have any leftovers from a meal make sure you cool them quickly before storing them in the fridge and use within 2 days. If you can't use the leftovers within 2 days you could store them in the freezer.
- Keep raw meat at the bottom of the fridge so juices won't drip onto ready to eat food.
- Thaw meat thoroughly before cooking. The safest way to defrost raw meat is on the bottom shelf of the fridge on a plate or tray to ensure that juices cannot drip onto other foods.

CLEANING



- Your hands can easily spread germs around the kitchen and onto food. Wash your hands thoroughly (with soap and warm water creating a lather all over) before preparing food and after touching raw meat, the bin, pets and going to the toilet. Dry your hands properly, because if they are wet they will spread germs more easily.
- It's very important to keep worktops, utensils and chopping boards clean because they touch the food you are going to eat. Wash them after use with hot water and washing up liquid or clean utensils in a dishwasher.
- Dirty, damp dishcloths sponges and tea towels are the perfect place for germs to breed. It's important to wash kitchen cloths and sponges regularly.

CROSS CONTAMINATION



- Keep raw meat, fish, poultry and other raw foods away from cooked foods and ready-to-eat foods such as salads, fruit and bread etc.
- Never prepare ready to eat food using a chopping board or knife that you have used to prepare raw meat, unless they have been washed thoroughly in hot soapy water.
- Don't wash your poultry before cooking as this can spread harmful germs across your kitchen through drips and splashes.
- Keep pets away from your food and food preparation areas.
- Avoid preparing food for yourself or others if you are ill, especially with vomiting and diarrhoea.



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