

The Indicator

NEWS AND INFORMATION ABOUT FOOD SAFETY

FIGHTING FOOD TERRORISM

Keeping the food supply safe in times of terrorism is a subject of great concern. Industry leaders are questioning the vulnerability of the food supply and what food processors and the government are doing to protect against bioterrorist attacks against U.S. citizens.

The government has initiated a number of programs to address the threat, administered by the USDA and the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS).

These agencies have been charged with assuring farm-to-table safety of our food.

Congress and the USDA have allocated \$38 million of the \$328 million Homeland Security budget to go to the food and agriculture sectors.

The USDA Homeland Security Council, working with the Office of Homeland Security, is divided into three subcouncils: Protection of the Food Supply and Agricultural Production (PFSAP); Protecting USDA Facilities and Other Infrastructures; and Protecting USDA Staff/Emergency Preparedness. Of the three, PFSAP is only the subcouncil with responsibilities for the food supply.

PFSAP will deal with issues concerning food production, processing, storage and distributing, threats against the agriculture sector, and the rapid response to such threats. Border surveillance, protection to prevent the introduction of plant and animal pests and diseases, food safety activities concerning meat, poultry and egg inspection, laboratory support, research, education, and foodborne illness outbreaks will also be the responsibility of this subcouncil.

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School Lunches Harbor Potential Dangers

Now that millions of children have returned to school, it is back to waking the kids up early, making sure homework is done and of course, packing those lunchboxes. Reports from the Centers for Disease Control indicate that the incidence of illness from food increased by 10 percent each year from 1990 to 1999. In 1999, the latest year for which statistics are available, 2900 children became sickened with school-related outbreaks.

The United States General Accounting Office has called for schools to have better access to inspection records of meats, fruits and vegetables in an effort to help schools avoid the contamination of their kitchens. In addition, the joint congressional committee is contemplating combining all food inspection services under a single department, rather than being spread throughout a number of agencies.

The increase of school foodborne illnesses mirrors that of society in general,

and does not differentiate between meals that were purchased at school and those that were prepared at home and brought into the school.

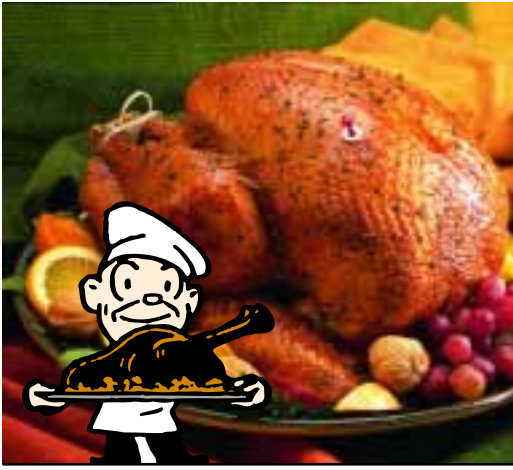
One way for schools to avoid the ravages of foodborne illness is to follow all safe food handling practices. Employees should wash their hands regularly when handling foods, and especially after using the restroom facilities. Fruits and vegetables should be thoroughly washed prior to use, even if they are scheduled to be cooked. Meat, seafood and poultry should be properly and fully cooked, and the temperature of the finished product checked with reliable temperature indicators. Foods should be stored in clean receptacles, in refrigeration units that are maintained at the proper temperatures.

While the importance of safe food handling cannot be downplayed, there is no cause for panic. The increase of illness reports may simply be the result of better reporting and tracking procedures,



a good development, according to the Institute of Food Technologists' Expert Report Emerging Microbiological Food Safety Issues: Implications for Control in the 21st Century. Improved tracking of food-borne illnesses can serve to improve food safety. "Improvements in detection, identification, and proper controls will manifest in reductions in the prevalence of foodborne illness," says Michael Doyle, of the University of Georgia, a contributing author to the IFT Expert Report.





Grocers' Case

It's Turkey Time Once Again

With autumn here, the holiday season can't be far behind. Research has shown that the holidays are a time when consumers are willing to put more time and effort into cooking meals for family and friends. Many may even attempt the traditional turkey dinner with all the trimmings.

Because some cooks don't cook from scratch on a regular basis, they often look to helpful aids to ease the task of getting a big meal on the table. Even experienced cooks look for more convenient ways to produce a festive holiday feast.

Studies have shown that the Pop-Up® Timer is a feature that many cooks seek in their fresh or frozen bird. They know the Pop-Up Timer is the most reliable way to tell when a turkey is done to the point of perfection.

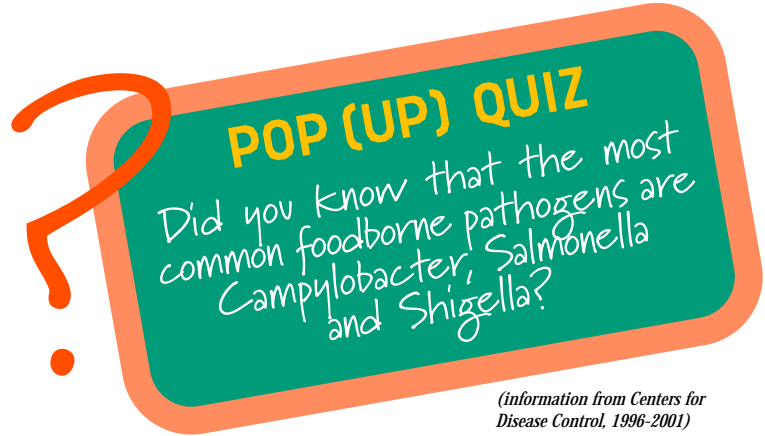
Pop-Up Timers take no experience or expertise to use properly. They are inserted at the point of processing by poultry technicians, and are specifically calibrated to "pop" at the right internal temperature. Pop-Up Timers are reliable to within 1-2° F, and are the best insurance for determining the doneness of a turkey, chicken, or duck. Use this easy chart to help determine the cooking times of various weights of turkeys:

Whole Birds Unstuffed	Whole Birds Stuffed
8-12 lbs. 2¾-3 hrs.	8-12 lbs. 3-3½ hrs.
12-14 lbs. 3-3¾ hrs.	12-14 lbs. 3½-4 hrs.
14-18 lbs. 3¾-4¼ hrs.	14-18 lbs. 4-4¼ hrs.
18-20 lbs. 4¼-4½ hrs.	18-20 lbs. 4¼-4¾ hrs.
20-24 lbs. 4½-5 hrs.	20-24 lbs. 4¾-5¼ hrs.

Industry Happenings

- November 3-7** International Expo of Food Processors, Chicago, IL
- November 3-8** Pack Expo, Chicago, IL
- November 8-11** National Food Processors Assoc., Washington DC
- January 22-24** International Poultry Expo, Atlanta, GA*

* indicates Volk Enterprises will be in attendance



(information from Centers for Disease Control, 1996-2001)

FIGHTING FOOD TERRORISM

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In addition, the Under Secretary for Food Safety has formed the Food Biosecurity Action Team (F-BAT), whose goals are to ensure the continuation of the FSIS during emergencies. F-Bat will safeguard FSIS employees pertaining to terrorism, bioterrorism, and catastrophic emergencies; ensure that the FSIS is prepared to prevent and respond to agricultural terrorism or attacks on the food supply; promote effective communication among agencies; and maintain the safety of FSIS laboratories.

The responsibility to help prevent terrorist attacks against the food industry does not stop with the government, however. Experts in safety and security issues stress the need for industry to adopt preventative measures to deal with food quality issues. Included in these steps are obvious ones such as updating and maintaining inspection practices, tightening security in ports, and making sure that chemicals and explosives are kept under lock and key. In addition, food processing facilities should make sure that parking lots, loading docks and mailrooms are protected, and that employees are not allowed to loiter on plant grounds after shift hours are over. Restricted access to computer control systems, laboratory facilities and other sensitive plant areas is also vital. Security guidelines for food facilities are published in the Federal Register.

Despite concerns about the safety of our food in these times, experts continue to have a high degree of confidence that the U.S. food manufacturing and distribution system is still the safest in the world. With food companies actively partnering with government and each other to tighten security, the public can be assured of their commitment to minimize risk.

Additional information about bioterrorism preparedness can be found at the FSIS and USDA websites: <http://www.fsis.usda.gov> and <http://www.usda.gov/biosecurity>.

COMMON SENSE

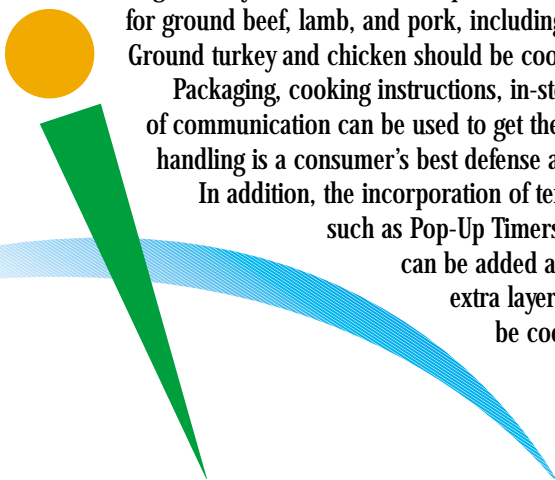
Importance of Safe Food Handling Cannot Be Over Emphasized

In light of recent concerns over the safety of the American food supply, processors are once again in the position to emphasize the importance of safe food handling practices on the consumer side. While food handling education is in no way a substitute for safe food handling practices on the processing end, it is important that consumers and other food handlers know that the deactivation of food pathogens such as E.coli and Salmonella is possible through cooking.

Food preparers need to be told - and retold - about the basics of food safety. Thorough and frequent hand washing during the food preparation process is a must. Cross-contamination can be avoided by separating raw foods from cooked foods, and by keeping preparation surfaces, such as cutting boards, clean. Different cutting boards should be used for vegetables and meats. In addition, plates and platters used to hold raw foods must be thoroughly cleaned with soap and water before being used to hold cooked foods. And, finally, foods should be cooked to their optimum temperature, as signified by a reliable food temperature indicator. This means 160°F for ground beef, lamb, and pork, including sausages and frankfurters. Ground turkey and chicken should be cooked to 165°F.

Packaging, cooking instructions, in-store signage, and other means of communication can be used to get the message across that safe food handling is a consumer's best defense against food-borne illness.

In addition, the incorporation of temperature indication devices, such as Pop-Up Timers and Cook'd Right sensors can be added at the processor level to add an extra layer of insurance that the food will be cooked properly.



check out some of this stuff below!



Teaching Kids About Food Safety

Kids are all about getting the details when something arouses their curiosity. A new website (www.good2eat.info) featuring a comedian from Great Britain tells all about the dangers of food poisoning, including some of the grosser details about what happens when a person contracts a foodborne illness. Comic Johnny Vegas has put together an informative and fun website that not only has real-life descriptions of what a bout with food poisoning is like, it also has great tips and ideas about how to avoid contracting the ailment in the first place. Included are food handling tips, information about hygiene, a food safety quiz, streaming video and games. It makes learning about food safety fun.

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Reminders for Safe Food Handling

DO: Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before handling foods.

DO: Use a dedicated cutting board to cut raw meat, poultry and seafood. Keep it clean with frequent washing with hot, soapy water.

DO: Sanitize all surfaces and utensils occasionally with a solution of 1 teaspoon of bleach in 1 quart of hot water. Let the solution stand on the surface for several minutes. Rinse and pat dry with paper towels.

DO: Use shallow containers to store leftovers.

DO: Store ice trays on the top shelf of the freezer so that nothing will drip down on them.

DO: Use a temperature indicator device to determine that the correct degree of doneness has been reached.

DON'T: Taste with the same spoon that is used to stir the pot. Use the two-spoon method for tasting.

DON'T: Serve any marinade applied to meat, poultry or seafood unless it has been brought to a rolling boil for at least 3 minutes.

DON'T: Put cooked meat on the platter that held the meat when it was raw, unless it has been cleaned with soap and water.

DON'T: Thaw frozen foods on the counter, thaw in the refrigerator or microwave. If thawed in the microwave, use immediately.

(adapted from Family Circle magazine)

What's Cookin'?

Autumn is the perfect time to take advantage of the fresh vegetables and herbs that are abundant at this time of year. This easy and convenient pot roast can be made in the oven or in a slow cooker.



Autumn Pot Roast

- 1 2-3 lb. beef chuck roast, boneless or bone-in
- 2 large white onions, peeled and cut into quarters
- 4 russet potatoes, peeled and cut into quarters
- 4 carrots, peeled and cut into chunks
- 2 stalks celery, cut into chunks
- 2 cloves garlic
- 2 cups low sodium beef stock (canned)
- 1 cup red wine (optional)
- Water, as necessary
- Sprigs of fresh thyme, rosemary, chervil, parsley, and summer savory, to taste
- 2 Tbl. vegetable oil

Heat oven to 350°F. In a large ovenproof pan with a lid, heat the oil over direct heat until hot. Add meat and brown well on both sides. Reduce heat to low. Pour beef stock over the chuck roast. Add onions, potatoes, carrots, celery, and garlic, and bring to a simmer. Add the herbs. Cover the pan and place in oven. Cook slowly, about 2 hours, until a Pop-Up® timer "pops", or until the chuck roast is tender and the vegetables are done. Check the roast occasionally to make sure there is water in the pan. Add more as necessary. During the last hour of cooking, add the wine, if desired.

At the end of the cooking, remove the roast and vegetables from the pan and keep warm. Discard the herbs. Add water to pan to make 2 cups, if needed. Place pan over direct heat and reduce the liquid to 1 cup, stirring often. Serve the reduced sauce with the pot roast.

Alternatively, this can be made in a slow cooker. Add the browned chuck roast along with the vegetables and herbs, water and wine, if used. Cook on a low setting 6-8 hours, until the meat is tender and the Pop-Up Timer has deployed. Serves 4-6.

Safe Grilling

Backyard grilling doesn't have to stop just because the seasons have changed. Whether it is tailgate parties at your favorite football game or a holiday feast, grilling is a year-round favorite method for preparing food.

And, while nearly anything can be grilled, (even pizzas, according to the Weber Grill Company!), it's those backyard basics, burgers and brats, that always get the rave reviews.

Bratwurst is a sausage of German origin, generally made with pork and/or veal and seasoned with spices such as ginger, mustard and coriander. The mild flavored brat is a Midwestern favorite, with many towns, most notably Sheboygan, Wisconsin, celebrating the sausage with festivals and fanfare. Grilled over charcoal or on a gas grill, the bratwurst should be slightly charred on the outside, and moist on the inside. Of course, good food safety practices dictate that the product be cooked to at least 160° F to insure doneness. Checking with a Cook'd Right Sensor makes this easy.

Bratwurst purists insist that the sausage be nestled in a hard roll and topped with German mustard, sauerkraut, and/or grilled onion for the best eating. However, inventive cooks have long used the versatile brat in many recipes that call for sausage. Some manufacturers have even shaped the usually tubular bratwurst into a patty shape for a burger-like presentation. Whatever the form, the bratwurst is sure to please. So, invite a bratwurst to your next tailgate party. Certainly, you will have the wurst of times.



Volk Enterprises is proud to be a member of the FTIA (Food Temperature Indicators Association), a not-for-profit trade organization founded to optimize research and scientific exploration, improve industry relations, and to develop consumer education programs. The group also participates in dialog about food safety within the government, industry, and the private sector.



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