

## Tips given for grilling food safely

Summer is great grilling time. Here are some tips to address the common concerns in grilling safety.

Marinate meat in the refrigerator to keep it cool. Treat the used marinade as you would the raw meat juices in contains – that means the marinade needs to be discarded or boiled if it will be used as a sauce.

Be sure to avoid cross-contamination when grilling. Raw meat juices may contain microorganisms that cause flu-like symptoms if eaten. Vegetables and cooked meat must be kept separate from raw and undercooked meat or meat juices on cutting boards, platters, and cooking and serving utensils. Although that may mean using more dishes, it's important to prevent food borne illness.

Meat must be cooked to the proper internal temperature when grilling. Use a meat thermometer to check internal food temperatures, making sure the sensor is in the middle of the thickest part of the meat. Be careful that the thermometer doesn't touch bone or peek out the other side of the meat, as this may give an inaccurate

temperature. For beef, veal and lamb steaks, roasts and chops, cook to 145° F or higher. For all cuts of pork, grill to 160° F or more. Ground meat of any kind should be cooked to a minimum internal temperature of at least 165° F.

Even on a cool day, meat off the grill should be eaten or refrigerated within two hours. That is because at air temperatures between 40 and 140° F – a range referred to as the Food Safety Danger Zone – germs that cause food borne illness thrive and can reach potentially dangerous levels within two hours. As air temperatures rise, that time period lessens. On hot days – 90° F or above – that time is reduced to one hour. To keep meat safe, don't let it sit out before or after grilling, eat it quickly or keep it cool.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has a Meat and Poultry hot line with recorded answers to many common questions. To contact the hot line, call 888-674-6854. *Source: Janet Hackert, Nutrition and Health Education Specialist, University of Missouri Extension*

## Get ready for home canning now

When you plant your garden, it's so easy to imagine all of the great-tasting, healthy food that will come from those tiny seeds and plants. Many people grow not only enough to eat during the summer, but enough so they can preserve those garden delights for cold winter nights. Spring and early summer is a great time to make sure your canning gear is ready

for production when your garden starts producing more than you can eat.

It's important to make sure the dial gauge on your canner is working accurately. The only safe way to can vegetables (and fish) is pressure canning. (Tomatoes are an exception. They can be processed in a boiling water bath.) In order to be able to assure bacteria are

destroyed, the water in the canner must reach 240 degrees. The only way to reach temperatures this high is in a pressure canner.

To assure your canner is reaching accurate temperatures, have the dial gauge tested to make sure it is accurate. Check with your local Extension Office to find out where to have your gauge tested.

Another thing you can do to prepare for the canning process is get your jars out and check them for cracks and chips. Jars that are cracked or chipped can break during the

canning process. Jars that are chipped around the rim can prevent a proper seal. Use only jars that are made for home canning. Jars made for other purposes can break and may not seal properly. The screw band of the lid can be used year after year but each flat placed on the top of the jar needs to be new.

Lastly, check the recipes you are using to can your products. Recipes published before 1989 may not be accurate. In 1989, processing times were changed for many vegetables. This occurred because there

were more reported incidences of food borne illness from home-canned food. To get up-to-date information on processing times for home-canned vegetables, contact the OSU Extension Office.

While you're waiting for the green beans and tomatoes, go ahead and eat the ones you processed last summer. For maximum quality, it is recommended that you use your home canned foods within one year.

*Source: Tammy Roberts, MS, RD, LD, Nutrition and Health Education Specialist, University of Missouri Extension*

## Don't eat this Cheesy Chicken & Rice

Public health officials, on June 24, repeated that an outbreak of salmonellosis has been linked to a boxed frozen entrée product manufactured by ConAgra Foods, Inc. under the Marie Callender label. The Cheesy Chicken & Rice item has been identified as the likely source of the outbreak, which has sickened at least 30 people in 15 states. Health officials worry that the entrée has not been removed from grocery store shelves. Consumers may also still have the product in their freezers.

"We're concerned that people and some retailers may not have gotten this information," said Emilio DeBess, a senior epidemiologist at the Oregon Public Health Division. "This product was sold at grocery stores throughout Oregon and elsewhere. Consumers who have any of the Cheesy Chicken & Rice entrées in their home freezers need to throw them out or return them to the store. Retailers that have this product in their stores need to get them out of circulation immediately.

"Oregon Department of Agriculture inspectors checked in a number of stores on Tuesday and found the recalled product still available in a limited number of stores," DeBess added. "To protect consumers, store managers need to be vigilant about responding to recall notices."

The outbreak was identified when Salmonella isolates from the same uncommon serotype, Salmonella Chester were found to be present. This particular molecular pattern began to appear at public health laboratories around the country. Interviews with the people sickened suggested frozen entrées as a common exposure, and follow-up interviews pinpointed the Marie Callender Cheesy Chicken & Rice product.

To date, two cases have been laboratory-confirmed among Oregon residents out of a total of 30 nationally. One of the Oregon cases was hospitalized; both have recovered from their illnesses. No deaths have been reported.

"We are still trying to help ConAgra figure out what caused this outbreak," DeBess said.

Although the recall covers all lots in the market, Oregon Public Health officials are particu-

larly interested in testing any boxes of Cheesy Chicken & Rice with 'best if used by' dates from any time in August 2011. Anyone with boxes containing those date codes should contact the state's Foodborne Illness Prevention Program at 971-673-1111.

DeBess emphasized that the outbreak has nothing to do with the restaurants and desserts that share the Marie Callender name. ConAgra purchased the rights to the Marie Callender brand name for frozen entrées many years ago, but otherwise these are unrelated businesses.

Salmonellosis is an acute bacterial infection that can cause diarrhea, fever and vomiting. Symptoms usually develop within one to five days after eating contaminated food. Most cases resolve without the need for medical attention, and antibiotics are not advised for most persons with uncomplicated illness. People who have eaten Marie Callender frozen entrées and who are still experiencing symptoms should discuss this exposure with their doctor. Some people with salmonellosis develop serious illness that can lead to hospitalization and, rarely, death.



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