

# FOOD SAFETY CHECKLIST FOR THE HOME

## BEFORE GROCERY SHOPPING

- Any refrigerated packaged foods that are beyond their expiry dates are discarded.
- Properly prepared and stored homemade dishes are not kept in the refrigerator more than 2 days. When in doubt, throw it out.
- Refrigerator temperature is set between 2°C (35°F) to 4°C (40°F). Consider buying a refrigerator thermometer.
- Freezer temperature is set at -18°C (0°F). Do not let temperature rise above -15°C (5°F).
- Refrigerator is regularly cleaned to remove spoiled foods that may transfer bacteria or moulds to other food.
- Refrigerator is not overstocked. Cool air is allowed to circulate freely.
- Pantry, cupboards and drawers where dry goods (e.g., pasta rice, canned foods, cereals) are stored are cleaned regularly to prevent the buildup of crumbs and other pieces of food. These may attract unwanted pests.

## AT THE MARKET

- Foods are bought in a reasonable quantities to avoid spoilage.
- The shopping list is arranged so that non-perishable items such as packaged foods, cleaners and paper products are selected first.
- Even if discounted in price, packages that have been opened or damaged are not purchased. These are susceptible to contamination.
- Ready-to-eat foods (e.g., hot dogs, cooked shrimp, deli meats) that are not physically separated from raw foods are avoided, as liquids from raw fish may come in contact with the cooked products and cause contamination. This should be brought to the attention of the store manager.
- Cans that are bulging or dented on the seam(s) are not purchased. These cans, especially those that are bulging, should be brought to the attention of the store manager.
- Raw protein foods (e.g., meat, poultry, fish) are placed in shopping cart so that they do not come in contact with food intended to be eaten uncooked (e.g., salad ingredients, breads or fruit).
- When packing groceries, meat, fish and poultry items are in separate bags to prevent juices from contaminating other foods.
- Packages that are loosely wrapped, torn or dripping with juices are not purchased. Bring to the attention of the store manager.

## AFTER GROCERY SHOPPING cont.

## AT THE MARKET cont.

- Frozen seafood is checked to ensure that it is clear of ice crystals, and has no white spots which indicate freezer burn. Frozen fish and crustaceans should be rock hard, and not show signs of thawed juices.
- Fresh fish is checked to ensure the flesh is firm and springs back when pressed. Whole fish should have bright red gills, clear eyes and shiny skin. However, if the eyes are cloudy but the flesh is vibrant and bright, the fish is probably good. Conversely, if the eyes are clear but the skin is dull and grayish, then don't buy it. Fish that has a strong smell or ammonia-like odour should not be purchased.
- Dairy product containers are checked to ensure they are cold before buying.
- Best before dates of dairy products are checked. Pick ones that will stay fresh the longest.
- Eggs are checked to ensure none are cracked or dirty. Avoid eggs that are not refrigerated.
- Only enough eggs for 1 or 2 weeks use are purchased.
- Produce is kept separate from uncooked protein foods.
- Caution is used when purchasing pre-sliced melons and similar food products. Only those pre-cut that are refrigerated or displayed on ice are considered.
- Vegetables that are grown beneath the soil (e.g., potatoes, carrots) are handled with care. These food products need to be washed to thoroughly rid them of surface dirt and possible bacteria.

## TRANSPORTING GROCERIES

- Groceries are immediately transported home, especially in hot weather. During extremely hot days, or if in transport for an extended period of time, it would be worthwhile to place perishables/protein foods in a portable cooler for the ride home.

## AFTER GROCERY SHOPPING

- Prior to unpacking and handling groceries, hands are washed with soap and warm water.
- Perishable/protein foods are unpacked first, and immediately refrigerated.
- Packages of raw meat and seafood are placed on a platter, in plastic food bags or other containers in the refrigerator, so that juices do not drip on ready-to-eat foods.

- ❑ Eggs are kept in their original carton, so that shells which may harbour bacteria do not contaminate refrigerator surfaces or other food.
- ❑ Frozen food is thawed in the refrigerator, under cold running water or in the microwave oven at the defrost setting unless package directions specify immediate cooking. Food should not be defrosted at room temperature.
- ❑ Young children are not permitted to handle raw protein foods.
- ❑ Labels on packaged food are checked for storage directions. After 4 hours, if you have neglected to refrigerate food products like mayonnaise after opening, discard them.
- ❑ Dry foods are to be stored separate from household cleaning products or chemicals. Chemicals are to be clearly marked. If a chemical must be repackaged or mixed and stored in another container, choose one which is clearly not a food container and ensure that it is properly labeled. This is to prevent inadvertent consumption of a poisonous substance.
- ❑ FIFO (first in, first out) rule is practiced. Recently purchased canned goods are placed behind those previously purchased so that the older canned goods are used first.

## DURING MEAL PREPARATION

- ❑ Hands are thoroughly washed with soap and warm water, with special attention paid to the nails.
- ❑ Lids of canned foods are wiped before opening to keep the dirt from getting into the contents. Clean the blade of the can opener after each use.
- ❑ Fruits and vegetables are washed with warm water. A vegetable brush should be used when these are heavily soiled. Particular attention should be paid to those that will be served raw, and those without a protective peel that is removed before eating.
- ❑ Ground meat (e.g., hamburger patties) is cooked thoroughly until meat is brown, NOT PINK, and the juices are clear. Consider buying a probe thermometer to check that the center of the burger reaches 68°C (155°F) for a minimum of 15 seconds.
- ❑ Meat, poultry or seafood is marinated in the refrigerator, never at room temperature. After marinating, the sauce is disposed of as it contains raw meat or fish juices. Fresh marinade used for basting as meat cooks, should not be applied during the final stages of cooking or grilling. To use marinade as sauce, it is advisable to double your recipe, set half aside in refrigerator away from meat and use uncontaminated portion after meat is cooked.

## DURING MEAL PREPARATION cont.

- ❑ Any container or bowl that has held raw protein foods, and any utensil, knives and surfaces that have come in contact with raw protein foods are thoroughly washed before reuse.
- ❑ A separate cutting board is used for ready-to-eat foods and a different one for raw protein foods. Minimally, cutting boards are to be sanitized by washing in soap and hot water then rinsed with a diluted bleach mixture (1 capful household bleach / 1 gal. water) between uses.
- ❑ Aprons, kitchen towels and dish cloths are frequently washed. Sponges are changed often.
- ❑ Food processors, meat grinders and blenders are taken apart and cleaned as soon as possible after use.
- ❑ Any open sores or cuts on the hands are completely covered with rubber surgical-type gloves, or a water-proof bandage. If the sore or cut is infected, stay out of the kitchen.
- ❑ When sick, such as having a cold or the flu, the kitchen area is avoided. Meals for other people are not prepared by anyone who is sick.

## SERVING FOOD

- ❑ Hot foods are served hot or above 60°C (140°F). Use a meat thermometer to check temperature.
- ❑ Within 2 hours, leftovers are brought to a temperature of 74°C (165°F) before serving.
- ❑ Cold foods are served cold, below 4°C (40°F).

## AFTER THE MEAL

- ❑ Large quantities are split into several small, shallow storage containers so that the contents cool down rapidly. Do not simply remove a large pot of food (e.g., soup, stew, pasta sauce) from the stove and place it in the refrigerator. Such a large mass of food will take hours or days to properly chill and will provide an ideal environment for growth of harmful bacteria.
- ❑ Cooked foods do not sit out at room temperature for more than 2 hours. Leftovers are wrapped or covered and refrigerated immediately after the meal and used within 2 days, if not placed in the freezer.

For more information on food safety and *FOODSAFE* (foodhandling) courses, contact Environmental Health Services at (867) 667-8391 or 1-800-661-0408, ext. 8391, or by email <environmental.health@gov.yk.ca>.