

## Four Steps to Food Safety:

# Clean, Separate, Cook & Chill

### **Clean: Wash hands and surfaces often**

According to food safety experts, bacteria can spread throughout the kitchen and get on to cutting boards, knives, sponges and counter tops. Here's how to Fight BAC:

- Wash hands in hot soapy water before preparing food and after using the bathroom, changing diapers and handling pets. For best results, consumers should use warm water to moisten their hands and then apply soap and rub their hands together for 20 seconds before rinsing thoroughly.
- Wash cutting boards, knives, utensils and counter tops in hot soapy water after preparing each food item and before going on to the next one.
- Use plastic or other non-porous cutting boards. Cutting boards should be run through the dishwasher—or washed in hot soapy water—after use.
- Consider using paper towels to clean up kitchen surfaces. Or, if using cloth towels, consumers should wash them often in the hot cycle of the washing machine.

### **Separate: Don't cross-contaminate**

Cross-contamination is how bacteria spreads from one food product to another. This is especially true for raw meat, poultry and seafood. Experts caution to keep these foods and their juices away from ready-to-eat foods. Here's how consumers can Fight BAC!

- Separate raw meat, poultry and seafood from other food in the grocery shopping cart.
- Store raw meat, poultry and seafood on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator so juices don't drip onto other foods.
- If possible, use one cutting board for raw meat products and another for salads and other foods which are ready to be eaten.
- Always wash cutting boards, knives and other utensils with hot soapy water after they come in contact with raw meat, poultry and seafood.
- Never place cooked food on a plate which previously held raw meat, poultry or seafood.

### **Cook: Cook to proper temperatures**

Food safety experts agree that foods are properly cooked when they are heated for a long enough time and at a high enough temperature to kill the harmful bacteria that cause foodborne illness. The best way to Fight BAC is to:

- Use a meat thermometer, which measures the internal temperature of cooked meat and poultry, to make sure that the meat is cooked all the way through.
- Cook roasts and steaks to at least 145°F. Whole poultry should be cooked to 180°F.
- Cook ground meat, where bacteria can spread during grinding, to at least 160°F. Information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) links eating undercooked, pink ground beef with a higher risk of illness. If a thermometer is not available, do not eat ground beef that is still pink inside.
- Cook eggs until the yolk and white are firm, not runny. Don't use recipes in which eggs remain raw or only partially cooked.
- Cook fish until it is opaque and flakes easily with a fork.
- Make sure there are no cold spots in food (where bacteria can survive) when cooking in a microwave oven. For best results, cover food, stir and rotate for even cooking. If there is no turntable, rotate the dish by hand once or twice during cooking.
- Bring sauces, soups and gravy to a boil when reheating. Heat other leftovers thoroughly to 165°F.

### **Chill: Refrigerate promptly**

Food safety experts advise consumers to refrigerate foods quickly because cold temperatures keep most harmful bacteria from growing and multiplying. So, public health officials recommend setting the refrigerator at 40°F and the freezer unit at 0°F and occasionally checking these temperatures with an appliance thermometer. Then, folks can Fight BAC by following these steps:

- Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared food and leftovers within two hours.
- Never defrost (or marinate) food on the kitchen counter. Use the refrigerator, cold running water or the microwave.
- Divide large amounts of leftovers into small, shallow containers for quick cooling in the refrigerator.
- With poultry and other stuffed meats, remove the stuffing and refrigerate in a separate container.
- Don't pack the refrigerator. Cool air must circulate to keep food safe.