



Food Facts Highlights: Top New Year's Resolutions for 2005

USDA advises putting these "food safety" resolutions at the top of your 2005 New Year's list.

1. **I will buy and use a food thermometer.** It's the only way to know if meat, poultry and fish are cooked safely. You can't tell just by looking.
2. **I will use an appliance thermometer in the refrigerator** and will check to make sure that the temperature is 40°F or below. In the freezer, I will make sure the thermometer reads 0°F or below. Bacteria grow rapidly at temperatures above 40° F.
3. **I will not leave pizza sitting out on the table or my "doggie" bag in the car overnight.** Foods should not be left out more than two hours at room temperature, or 1 hour if it is over 90° F. Remember: When in doubt, throw it out.
4. **I will not defrost my turkey in the garage or in the trunk of my car.** The only USDA-approved way to defrost food is in the refrigerator, in cold water or in the microwave.
5. **I will wash my hands and all food preparation surfaces with soap and water** before and after touching raw meat, poultry or fish. Bacteria on raw meat, fish or poultry can contaminate other foods such as bread or lettuce that will not be cooked.
6. I will not feed my dog or cat old "leftovers" or "take-out" food that's no longer fit for people. Animals can also be stricken with foodborne illnesses.
7. **I will not leave "take-out" or "ready-to-eat" food in the refrigerator so long that it's forgotten.** You can't tell by looking at or smelling if a food is unsafe. Throw it away after three days and never taste a food that you don't know what it is or how long it has been in the refrigerator!
8. **I will not lick the spoon or the bowl of homemade cookie dough or cake batter made with raw eggs.** Salmonella - a very unpleasant and potentially dangerous illness can come from eating raw eggs - even one taste of raw dough could contain harmful bacteria.
9. **When grilling outdoors, I will use a clean plate for the cooked hamburgers, hot dogs or other meat or fish.** I won't use the same plate that held raw meat. Juices from raw meat, poultry or fish could contaminate your cooked food.
10. **I will separate cooked foods from uncooked foods when preparing a meal, including using separate cutting boards and knives.** Cross-contamination could cause harmful bacteria from one food to be transferred to another food.
11. **I will always put an ice pack in my child's lunch box and my own lunch bag** if I have a perishable lunch, such as meat, poultry, fish, milk or eggs. Foods in lunch boxes sitting in warm classrooms or offices could result in foodborne illnesses. Children under the age of 10 are the most vulnerable.
12. **I will not "save money" by buying deeply dented cans or cracked jars.** Never use food from badly damaged containers. This applies to containers that are leaking, bulging or badly dented. Do not use food from cracked jars with loose or bulging lids, canned food with a foul odor or any container that spurts liquid when you open it. It's not worth taking a risk to save a few pennies.
13. **I will put meat and poultry packages in plastic bags at the meat counter before putting them in my grocery cart.** Leaking packages from meat or poultry could contaminate other foods in the cart, leading to foodborne illnesses.

The USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline is only a phone call away: toll free at 1-888-674-6854, TTY: 1-800-256-7072. You can call the year-round hotline Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. EST (English or Spanish). Listen to timely recorded food safety messages at the same number 24 hours a day. Do not guess about food safety, the health of your family and friends may be at stake. January 2005.