

How to Avoid Cross Contamination in the Kitchen



Cross-contamination is the main reason for many food-borne illness outbreaks. Even if meat has been cooked correctly, meals can still become contaminated with pathogens if cross-contamination isn't avoided in the preparation process.

Put simply, if raw foods come into contact with ready-to-eat foods, cross-contamination can occur. While this may seem difficult to stop, avoiding cross-contamination is quite simple if you follow these steps.

STORE FOOD IN THE RIGHT PLACE

Where you store food plays a major role in preventing cross-contamination. When placing foods in the refrigerator, where and how foods are stored is incredibly important.

- Raw meats should always be stored on the bottom shelf. This eliminates the risk of juices dripping onto other foods and contaminating them.
- Raw meat, poultry and seafood should be stored in covered containers or sealed plastic bags to prevent their juices from dripping or leaking onto other foods.
- If you're not planning on using meat within a few days of purchase, it should be placed in the freezer for defrosting at a later date.
- Meats and ready-to-eat foods should never be placed next to each other or on the same shelves.

CHOPPING BOARDS

Chopping boards can be an easy place for cross-contamination to occur. Placing ready-to-eat foods such as fresh produce on a surface that held raw meat, poultry, seafood or eggs can spread harmful bacteria. Avoiding cross-contamination across cutting surfaces is avoidable.

- Plastic or glass surfaces should be used for cutting raw meats.
- Use one chopping board for raw meat, poultry and seafood.
- Use a separate chopping board for ready-to-eat foods.
- Use separate plates and utensils for cooked and raw foods.
- Before reusing them, thoroughly clean and sanitise plates, utensils and cutting boards that have come into contact with raw meat, poultry, seafood or eggs.
- Chopping boards should be replaced if they are excessively scratched or damaged. Damaged chopping boards develop grooves that are hard to clean, making bacteria difficult to eliminate.

WASHING HANDS AND COUNTERS

While you are cooking, you need to ensure that you wash your hands properly. This should include after you handle any raw meats and after cooking. Additionally, all counters and surfaces should be thoroughly cleaned and sanitised after raw meats have been anywhere near them.

Cross-contamination can be easily avoided if the right precautions are taken. To eliminate the spread of harmful bacteria in your kitchen, proper cleaning and sanitising practices are required.

