

Gloucester City Council

Environmental Health Factsheet

Advice on summer eating

Warmer weather means more people will be thinking about eating salads and cooking outdoors on barbecues, for picnics and at campsites etc. The warmer temperatures are also ideal for some bugs to multiply and cause food poisoning. Last year the weekly number of notified food poisoning cases doubled in the summer months.

People eating and those catering at summer events are reminded of the need to observe good food hygiene so that food can be stored, prepared and consumed safely.

Barbecues

Raw meats such as burgers, sausages and chicken can carry food poisoning bugs. If raw meats aren't cooked properly, if they come into contact with ready to eat food or if they contaminate surfaces and equipment used to prepare food that won't be cooked, you risk causing illness.

You can reduce the risk of food poisoning by...

preparing well

- Light charcoal barbecues well in advance, making sure you use enough charcoal and waiting until it is glowing red (with a powdery grey surface) before starting cooking.
- Always wash your hands thoroughly - before preparing food, after touching raw meat and before eating.



ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

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- Make sure all cooking and eating utensils and work surfaces are spotlessly clean before use.
- Keep pets away from food, dishes and preparation surfaces.
- Unless the cooking instructions state otherwise, ensure that raw meat is completely defrosted (in the fridge or a microwave) before barbecuing so that it cooks evenly.

storing safely

- Always keep cold food cold and hot foods hot to stop bacteria multiplying - don't leave food standing around.
- Keep raw meats in a separate insulated container to prevent it contaminating other foods.
- At the barbecue only remove the lid of the insulated container when essential and only take out the quantity of meat that will fit on the barbecue.
- Keep serving bowls, food and utensils covered to protect from dust and insects.

cooking thoroughly

- Make sure you follow any cooking instructions provided.
- Turn food regularly and make sure burgers, sausages and chicken are cooked until they are piping hot throughout, there is no pinkness inside, and the juices run clear.
- If you reheat food make sure it is piping hot throughout.

observing good hygiene

- Always keep raw meats separate from other food even when cooking.
- Always use separate utensils for transferring the raw meat and handling the cooked meat.
- Never put cooked food on plates that held raw meat.
- Clean all cooking and eating utensils and work surfaces after use.
- Throw away barbecued food left out for more than two hours in very hot weather.

Never part-cook on a barbecue and finish cooking later. However, you can fully cook meat and chicken at home, keep it chilled, and then barbecue it to add flavour. ***This is the ideal way to avoid undercooking your chicken portions on the barbecue!***

New caterers

When catering for larger groups of people, there is often pressure to cook food quickly, and the conditions under which food is barbecued are often difficult to control.

- **Think safe! Don't serve food before it is fully cooked!**

Barbecues can be too hot in parts and not hot enough in other parts. By moving food around on the barbecue and turning regularly you can avoid over-charring the outside and ensure the inside is not under-cooked.

- **A brown or charred appearance does not mean meat is cooked right through!**
- **Thicker meat products such as "quarter pounders" easily appear cooked and charred on the outside before they are cooked through!**

The outward appearance of a burger, sausage or piece of chicken is not the best indicator of whether it has been cooked sufficiently. Raw meats should be heated to a minimum of 70°C for 2 minutes all the way through.

- **When burgers, sausages and chicken are cooked they should be piping hot throughout, there should be no pinkness inside and the juices should run clear.**
- **If you reheat food make sure it is piping hot throughout.**

Salads

- **Wash vegetables and salad items carefully to remove any soil and dirt, which can carry bacteria.**
- **Then wash soil from your hands, kitchen surfaces and other kitchen utensils.**

Some types of foods can be more difficult to prepare (e.g. lettuces) and it will take longer to clean them. Appearances can deceive.

- **The inside of an iceberg lettuce may seem clean but the leaves should still be separated and washed before they are eaten.**

The Food Standards Agency recently drew consumers' attention to a problem with *Salmonella kedougou* contamination of raw mushrooms. People who wish to eat mushrooms raw, or use them in salads, should first wash and peel the mushrooms or cook them and allow them to cool before serving.

Summary of Food safety tips for barbecues

- Always wash your hands thoroughly - before preparing food and after touching raw meat.
- Keep food preparation areas and utensils clean before use. Wash work surfaces and utensils between handling food to be cooked, and food that's not going to be cooked - or better still use different surfaces.
- Use separate utensils for raw and cooked meat.
- Completely thaw meat and poultry (in the fridge or a microwave) before barbecuing so that it cooks more evenly unless the cooking instructions state otherwise.
- Always marinate meat and poultry in the refrigerator. Don't reuse marinade that has been used with raw meat or poultry.
- Keep and prepare raw meats including chicken separate from other foods, even when cooking, to avoid cross contamination.
- Cook food well - follow the instructions on the pack.
- Turn food regularly as it cooks to avoid charring on one side and undercooking on the other.
- Cook all burgers, sausages, and chicken right through until the juices run clear, there is no pinkness inside and they are piping hot throughout.
- If you reheat food make sure it's piping hot throughout.
- Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold until it's time to eat them - don't leave them standing around.
- Keep insects and pets away from food, dishes and preparation surfaces - always wash your hands after handling pets.

Throw away barbecued food left out for more than two hours in very hot weather.