

KITCHEN CLEANLINESS

Cleanliness in the kitchen helps keep food safe to eat. It's especially important when food will be eaten by people who are more likely to get severe foodborne illness: pregnant women, young children, the elderly, and people with diseases such as cancer and AIDS.

Harmful bacteria such as Salmonella and E. coli O157:H7 can enter your kitchen on food. Raw meat and poultry are the most common source. Handle them carefully to keep these bacteria from spreading.

A University of Arizona study showed that the highest levels of kitchen contamination are in areas that remain damp (such as sponges and dish cloths, sink drains, and faucet handles).

- Would your kitchen pass a food safety inspection?
- Do you wash your hands before beginning food preparation?
Your hands can be a source of harmful bacteria and viruses. Wash with soap and warm water and rub thoroughly for 20 seconds.
- Do you use soap and water to clean the kitchen?
You do need to use soap, but it doesn't have to be anti-bacterial. Plain liquid soap removes bacteria.
- Do you sanitize kitchen sinks, faucets, and refrigerator door handles with dilute chlorine bleach?
Bacteria can hide on these surfaces.
- Do you use paper towels to clean up raw meat and poultry and its juices?
Paper towels can be disposed of easily and you won't contaminate dish cloths and sponges.
- Do you launder dish cloths frequently?
Laundry soap and the heat of the drier will kill harmful bacteria. If you use sponges, replace them frequently and color code them for intended use (such as cutting boards; countertops).
- Do you wash cutting boards used for raw meat/poultry with hot, soapy water? Do you then sanitize with dilute chlorine bleach?

Plastic cutting boards can be put into the dishwasher. Some people keep a separate cutting board for use with meat/poultry for safety's sake.

- Do you wash your hands after handling raw meat/poultry?
If not, you're transferring harmful bacteria to cupboards and other surfaces where they'll stay alive and contaminate again.
- Do you clean up raw meat/poultry spills in the refrigerator?
It pays to keep your refrigerator clean.

To sanitize wooden and plastic cutting boards:

- Wash with hot, soapy water. Rinse.
- Apply sanitation solution (3 Tbsp. liquid bleach/1 gallon warm water).
- Wait 2 minutes. Rinse.
- Air dry.

To sanitize countertops and surfaces:

- Wash with hot, soapy water. Rinse.
- Apply sanitizing solution (1 Tbsp. liquid bleach/1 gallon warm water)
- Wait 2 minutes. (Don't rinse.)
- Air dry.

To sanitize dinnerware, plastic and glassware:

- Wash with hot, soapy water.
- Thoroughly rinse.
- Soak in sanitizing solution (1 Tbsp. liquid bleach/1 gallon warm water)
- Air dry.

Note: Sanitizing is especially important if cold water has been used for washing. Don't use this method for sterling or silverplate. It will discolor.

Source: OSU Master Food Preserver Program

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