



Ten Tips to Prevent the Contamination of Food

An English translation of a Spanish publication of the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, Texas A&M University, entitled "Diez Consejos Para Prevenir la Contaminación de Alimentos ." Translated by permission.

By following some simple rules, you can help protect yourself and your family from food poisoning caused by noxious bacteria.

1. Buy food from vendors of good reputation. Be wary of traveling salesmen. Observe the expiration or "sell by" dates in the products that you buy. Buy products only if their packaging is in good condition. Avoid products whose packaging is dented, rusted or deformed.

2. Read the labels to familiarize yourself with the ingredients, including additives. If you are sensitive to certain additives, limit your consumption of foods that contain those substances. Buy a variety of foods to avoid consuming too much of one substance.

3. Bring groceries from the store to your house immediately and store them properly. Do not let them remain at a temperature in the "danger zone" (between 40° F and 140° F) for more than two hours.

4. Keep all counters and utensils clean and disinfect them often. Disinfect them with a solution of two tablespoons of bleach per

quart of water.

5. Throw food that has gone bad in the trash. If in doubt, throw it away.

6. Wash fresh fruit and vegetables with clean water before eating them. Use a brush when possible, to remove bacteria and dirt. Peeling fruit and vegetables reduces the risk of dirt and bacteria but may also reduce a source of valuable nutrients (that are found in the rind).

7. Defrost foods in the refrigerator or microwave oven--not on the counter. Cook the food immediately after defrosting it.

8. Cook all foods completely (to the correct internal temperature).

9. Maintain adequate temperatures in the refrigerator (at or below 40° F) and in the freezer (at or below 0° F).

10. Refrigerate leftovers immediately. Put them in shallow containers that are closed securely. Heat leftovers to 165° F and heat sauces and liquid foods until they boil.