

“Is it **done** yet?”

You can't tell by **looking**. Use a **food thermometer** to be sure.

Feature Article

Is It Done Yet? Tips for Using Your Food Thermometer to Prevent Foodborne Illness

Kids popping into the kitchen or dashing by a barbecue grill ask impatiently, “Is it done yet?” The answer to this hungry question is the basis of a national campaign to encourage the use of food thermometers when preparing meat, poultry, and egg dishes to prevent foodborne illness. The campaign, which is being led by USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), is themed, “Is It Done Yet? You Can't Tell By Looking. Use a Food Thermometer To Be Sure!”

Studies have shown that using a food thermometer is the only way to tell if harmful bacteria have been destroyed. FSIS reports that even if hamburgers look fully cooked, one in four hamburgers may not be safely cooked. Yet only 6 percent of home cooks use a food thermometer for hamburgers and only 10 percent use a food thermometer for chicken breasts, according to the latest data from the Food Safety Survey, which was conducted by FSIS and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

USDA food safety experts encourage people to get and use a food thermometer—dial or digital—and become a role model in their neighborhoods. By using a food thermometer to check if meat, poultry, or egg dishes are done, you also prevent overcooking and guesswork. Food cooked to a safe internal temperature is juicy and flavorful. If you use a food thermometer, then you'll know the answer to “Is it done yet?” You can buy a food thermometer in many grocery, hardware, or kitchen stores. Here are some tips for using it:

- Insert the food thermometer into the thickest part of the food, making sure it doesn't touch bone, fat, or gristle.
- Cook food until the thermometer shows an internal temperature of 160 °F for hamburger, pork, and egg dishes; 145 °F for beef, veal, and lamb steaks and roasts; and 165 °F for all poultry.
- Clean your food thermometer with hot, soapy water before and after each use.

FSIS has created a Web site to provide consumers with recommended internal temperatures and instructions on how to use a food thermometer:

www.IsItDoneYet.gov

FSIS is partnering with various organizations, agencies, and local groups to help spread this important food safety message.

For food safety information in English and Spanish, call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at (888) MPHotline (674-6854) or TTY: (800) 256-7072. The year-round toll-free hotline can be called Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. ET. An extensive selection of timely food safety messages also is available at the same number 24 hours a day.

For a free copy of the “Is It Done Yet?” brochure, order online at www.pueblo.gsa.gov/rc/safefood.htm or send your name and address to Federal Citizen Information Center (FCIC), Dept. 11, Pueblo, CO 81009.

Consumers may also pose food safety questions by logging on to FSIS' online automated response system called “Ask Karen,” which is available on the FSIS Web site at www.fsis.usda.gov. E-mail inquiries can be directed to MPHotline@fsis.usda.gov.

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