

Welcome to Spring . . . A Great Time for Eggs!

It's spring — the season to enjoy the great outdoors and celebrate special occasions, like Easter, Passover, and graduation! While eggs are used all year 'round, they are especially important for many spring-and-summertime activities. They are used for cooking festive delights and for decorating and hiding just before the big Easter egg hunt.

Like all perishable foods, such as meat, poultry, seafood, and produce, eggs need to be handled properly to prevent foodborne illness. Occasionally, eggs with clean, uncracked shells can be contaminated with bacteria.

If foods containing harmful bacteria are consumed, they can cause foodborne illness. That's why it's important to cook eggs thoroughly and use a food thermometer to make sure egg-containing foods reach a safe internal temperature.

Here's what YOU can do to have a safe and *eggs-cellent* spring and summer!

Clean Up, Clean Up . . .

- Before you begin preparing holiday dishes, remember that clean hands are key! Always **wash hands with hot, soapy water** *before* and *after* food preparation, as well as when you're handling raw animal products, such as raw eggs.
- **Beware of cross-contamination.** Foodborne illness can occur when kitchen equipment is not thoroughly washed between uses. Always wash surfaces and cooking equipment, including blenders, in hot, soapy water *before* and *after* food preparation.

Cook and Keep Cool . . .

- Bacteria can multiply in moist foods, including desserts and salads containing high-protein foods. Refrigeration *slows* bacterial growth, so it's important to **refrigerate eggs and egg-containing foods**.
- **Remember the 2-Hour Rule:** Don't leave perishables out at room temperature for more than 2 hours. Bacteria love to grow in protein-rich foods.
- Whether you like your breakfast eggs scrambled or fried, always **cook eggs until the yolks and whites are firm**.
- Tasting is tempting, but **licking a spoon or tasting raw cookie dough from a mixing bowl can be risky**. Bacteria could be lurking in the raw eggs.
- **Cook cheese cakes, lasagna, baked ziti, and egg dishes to an internal temperature of at least 160° F.** Use a food thermometer to check.

EGG - STRA! EGG - STRA!

Read all about egg safety for Easter egg hunts! Use these tips to plan an *egg-citing* event.

Before the hunt . . .

- Wash your hands thoroughly *before* handling eggs at every preparation step, including cooking, cooling, dyeing, and hiding.
- Only use eggs that have been refrigerated and discard eggs that are cracked or dirty.
- When cooking, place a single layer of eggs in a saucepan. Add water to at least one inch above the eggs. Cover the pan, bring the water to a boil, and carefully remove the pan from the heat. Let the eggs stand (18 minutes for extra large eggs, 15 minutes for large, 12 minutes for medium). Immediately run cold water over the eggs. When the eggs are cool enough to handle, place them in an uncovered container in the refrigerator where they can air-dry.
- When decorating, be sure to use food grade dyes. It is safe to use commercial egg dyes, liquid food coloring, and fruit-drink powders. When handling eggs, be careful not to crack them. Otherwise, bacteria could enter the egg through the cracks in the shell.
- Keep hard-cooked Easter eggs refrigerated until just before the hunt. Keep them *fully* chilled by storing them on a shelf *inside* the refrigerator, not in the refrigerator door.
- Consider buying one set of eggs for decorating only and another set for eating.

During the hunt . . .

- Hide the eggs in places that are protected from dirt, pets, and other potential sources of bacteria.
- To prevent bacterial growth, don't let eggs sit in hiding places for more than 2 hours.

After the hunt . . .

- Discard any eggs that were cracked, dirty, or that children didn't find within 2 hours.
- Place the eggs back in the refrigerator until it's chow time!

HAPPY SPRING!

On The Road Again . . .

When traveling or picnicking away from home, it's important to take along the basic food safety necessities and follow these helpful tips:

- If water for handwashing is not available, take along disposable wipes.
- Like all perishables, eggs need to be kept cold. When hosting an outdoor celebration, store cold egg dishes in the cooler, along with a cold pack or ice.
- When traveling, transport the cooler in the air-conditioned passenger compartment of your car, rather than in a hot trunk.
- Don't let egg dishes sit out for more than 2 hours. On a hot day (90° F or higher), reduce this time to 1 hour.

If you have questions or concerns about food safety, contact:

- The **U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Meat and Poultry Hotline** at (800) 535-4555 or (202) 720-3333 (Washington, DC area). The TTY number for the hearing impaired is (800) 256-7072.
- The **U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Food Information Line** at (888) SAFE FOOD.
- The **Fight BAC!**[®] Web site at: www.fightbac.org

If you have questions or concerns about eggs, contact:

- The **American Egg Board (AEB)** at www.aeb.org
- The **Egg Nutrition Center (ENC)** at www.enc-online.org

The Partnership for Food Safety Education
655 15th St NW 7th Floor
Washington, DC 20005