

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 meat, poultry, seafood and produce, eggs are perishable and need to be handled properly to prevent foodborne illness. Occasionally, eggs with clean, uncracked shells can be contaminated with bacteria, specifically *Salmonella* Enteritidis. Here's what YOU can do to have a safe and egg-cellent spring!

Clean Up, Clean Up...

- Clean hands are key! Always wash hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds before and after food handling.
- Beware of cross-contamination. Foodborne illness can occur when kitchen equipment is not thoroughly washed between uses. Always wash food contact surfaces and cooking equipment, including blenders, in hot water and soap.

Cook and Keep Cool...

- Bacteria love to grow in moist, protein-rich foods. Refrigeration slows bacterial growth, so it's important to refrigerate eggs and egg-containing foods. Your refrigerator should be at 40 °F or below. Use a thermometer to monitor.
- Remember the 2-Hour Rule: Don't leave perishables out at room temperature for more than two hours.
- 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 cheesecakes, lasagna, baked pasta and egg dishes to an internal temperature of 160 °F. Use a food thermometer.

Easter Egg Hunt Know-How

- 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 chilled on a shelf inside the refrigerator, not in the refrigerator door.

- Hide the eggs in places that are protected from dirt, pets and other potential sources of bacteria.

- Remember the two hour rule, and make sure the “found” eggs are back in the refrigerator or consumed within two hours.

- Remember that hard-boiled eggs are only safe to eat for one week after cooking.

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

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854). TTY 1-800-256-7072.

- The Fight BAC!® Web site at www.fightbac.org.

- Gateway to Government Food Safety Information at www.foodsafety.gov

The Partnership for Food Safety Education is a non-profit organization and creator and steward of the Fight BAC!® consumer education program. The Partnership is dedicated to providing the public with science-based, actionable recommendations for the prevention of foodborne illness.