

[Retailer article]

Follow These 6 Smart ProducePro Practices to Fight BAC![®] Against Food Poisoning

We eat fruits and vegetables to enjoy as a nutritious meal or snack. But produce can become contaminated with illness-causing pathogens anywhere from farm to fork. Did you know that foodborne pathogens such as *Salmonella* are most commonly found in fresh fruits and vegetables? Since we can't see, smell or taste pathogens, you're the last line of defense in preventing foodborne poisoning at home. Safe produce handling is all part of eating well. Follow these six smart produce-handling practices to help protect yourself at home and become a real ProducePro.

1. Check:

Bruises or cuts on produce can make produce more susceptible to bacteria.

- Check that the fresh fruits and vegetables you buy are not bruised or damaged.
- When choosing pre-cut fruits and vegetables like packaged salads and sliced melons, check that the product is refrigerated or on ice.

2. Clean:

Bacteria from unwashed hands can make you sick if it gets into your food when you're preparing or eating it.

- Wash hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Clean all surfaces and utensils with hot water and soap, including cutting boards and knives, before and after preparing fresh fruits and vegetables.

3. Rinse:

Rinsing fruits and vegetables with water is shown to reduce bacteria.

Remember to use a clean, sanitized brush to avoid cross-contamination.

- Just before use, rinse under running water only the fruits and vegetables you plan to eat, including those with skins or rinds that are not eaten.
- Firm-skin fruits and vegetables should be rubbed by hand or scrubbed with a clean brush while rinsing under running tap water.
- Packaged fruits and vegetables labeled "ready-to-eat," "washed" or "triple washed" should not be washed.
- Dry fruits and vegetables with a clean cloth or paper towel.
- Do not use soap or bleach to wash fresh fruits or vegetables. These products are not intended for consumption.

4. Separate:

Food contamination can easily happen just by touching other raw foods or drippings from raw foods.

- In your shopping cart and in bags at checkout, separate fresh fruits and vegetables from household chemicals and raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs.
- In your refrigerator, keep fresh fruits and vegetables separate from raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs.
- When preparing food, keep fresh fruits and vegetables separate from raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs. Do not use the same cutting board or utensils without cleaning with hot water and soap before and after preparing fresh fruits and vegetables.

5. Chill:

Temperatures between 40°F and 140°F are considered the “Danger Zone” in which bacteria on food can double in as little as twenty minutes. To fight bacteria growth:

- Keep your refrigerator at or below 40°F.
- Refrigerate all cut, peeled or cooked fresh fruits and vegetables within two hours of preparing.

6. Throw away:

To stay safe, happy and healthy, follow one simple mantra: If in doubt, throw it out. That means:

- Throw away any fresh fruit and vegetables that have not been refrigerated within two hours of cutting, peeling or cooking.
- Remove and throw away bruised or damaged portions of fruits and vegetables when preparing to cook them or before eating them raw.
- Throw away any fruit or vegetables that have touched raw meat, poultry, seafood or eggs.

By following these six smart tips, you have the power to Fight BAC!® And remember, if in doubt, throw it out!