

## Recipe for safe food: Clean, cook, chill, separate

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An image made from a video provided by the USDA shows a scene from a new U.S. government campaign to raise awareness of safe handling of foods. The campaign reminds people to clean off surfaces and utensils, separate raw meats from other foods and other safety precautions. (AP Photo/USDA)

(AP) -- Clean. Cook. Chill. Separate. That's the message of a new U.S. government campaign to raise awareness of safe food handling in the wake of a European E. coli outbreak that has killed almost 50 people.

The campaign, launched just before the barbecue-heavy Fourth of July holiday, hopes to remind busy home chefs to clean off surfaces and utensils, wash hands, separate raw meats from other foods and cook meat to the right temperature, among other safety precautions.

The ad blitz - it will be seen on television, in print and through social media - is spearheaded by the Ad Council, which is behind other famous government ad campaigns like "Friends don't let friends drive drunk" and Smokey Bear's efforts to stamp out forest fires.

"This is just a good reminder to make sure that in the rush of trying to get the meal on the table you don't forget one of these rules and put yourself at additional risk," says [Agriculture Secretary](#) Tom Vilsack.

The federal [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) estimates that 48 million people - or one in six Americans - are sickened every year by a [foodborne illness](#). Of those, 180,000 are hospitalized and 3,000 die. The last several years have seen high-profile outbreaks in peanuts, eggs and produce.

The USDA is launching the campaign this week to get the message out as people plan holiday cookouts. Elisabeth Hagen, head of food safety at USDA, says consumers too often ignore the temperature of meat. [Ground beef](#), which is more prone to pathogens than other cuts of beef, should always be cooked through to 160 degrees. Color is not always a reliable indicator.

"The most important thing you can do is buy yourself a meat thermometer and use it," Hagen says.

Government officials hope the ads will be as successful as previous federal advertising efforts, like those aimed at increasing seat belt use or curbing drunk driving. The ads attempt to use humor to get the message across, including one spot in which a mom orders a chicken to sit on the opposite side of the living room from a bunch of carrots, urging consumers to separate raw meats and other foods.

"We knew we had to break through the clutter and really grab attention

and make people understand this is something that can happen to you and your family," said Heidi Arthur of the Ad Council. "People don't necessarily see themselves at risk because they think they are doing enough."

**More information:** Government food safety information:  
<http://www.foodsafety.gov>

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