



Oregon State University Extension Service

Food Safety & Preservation

Kitchen Cleanliness

Cleanliness in the kitchen helps keep food safe to eat. It's especially important when food will be eaten by people who are more likely to get severe foodborne illness: pregnant women, young children, the elderly, and people with diseases such as cancer and AIDS.

Harmful bacteria such as Salmonella and E. coli O157:H7 can enter your kitchen on food. Raw meat and poultry are the most common source. Handle them carefully to keep these bacteria from spreading.

A University of Arizona study showed that the highest levels of kitchen contamination are in areas that remain damp (such as sponges and dish cloths, sink drains, and faucet handles).

Would your kitchen pass a food safety inspection?

- Do you wash your hands before beginning food preparation?
Your hands can be a source of harmful bacteria and viruses. Wash with soap and warm water and rub thoroughly for 20 seconds.
- Do you use soap and water to clean the kitchen?
You do need to use soap, but it doesn't have to be anti-bacterial. Plain liquid soap removes bacteria.
- Do you sanitize kitchen sinks, faucets, and refrigerator door handles with dilute chlorine bleach?
Bacteria can hide on these surfaces.
- Do you use paper towels to clean up raw meat and poultry and its juices?
Paper towels can be disposed of easily and you won't contaminate dish cloths and sponges.
- Do you launder dish cloths frequently?
Laundry soap and the heat of the drier will kill harmful bacteria. If you use sponges, replace them frequently and color code them for intended use (such as cutting boards; countertops). Sponges can also be sanitized by running through the dishwasher when cleaning dishes, or microwaved until steaming.
- Do you wash cutting boards used for raw meat/poultry with hot, soapy water?
Do you then sanitize with dilute chlorine bleach? Plastic cutting boards can be put into the dishwasher. Some people keep a separate cutting board for use with meat/poultry for safety's sake.
- Do you wash your hands after handling raw meat/poultry?

If not, you're transferring harmful bacteria to cupboards and other surfaces where they'll stay alive and contaminate again.

- Do you clean up raw meat/poultry spills in the refrigerator?
It pays to keep your refrigerator clean.

To sanitize cutting boards:

- Wash the cutting board with hot sudsy water.
- Rinse, then drain and sanitize with either a kitchen sanitizer (follow directions on the bottle) or a diluted chlorine bleach solution. To make the bleach solution, mix 1 teaspoon of bleach with a quart of water.
- Spray or wipe the mixture onto the cutting board and let it sit for at least 2 minutes. Then rinse and air dry.

To sanitize countertops and surfaces:

- Wash with hot sudsy water.
- Rinse, then drain and sanitize with either a kitchen sanitizer (follow directions on the bottle) or a diluted chlorine bleach solution. To make the bleach solution, mix 1 Tablespoon of bleach with a gallon of water.
- Spray or wipe the mixture onto the cutting board and let it sit for at least 2 minutes and air dry.

To sanitize dishes and utensils:

- Wash dishes, then soak for 10–15 seconds in a solution of 1 Tablespoon chlorine bleach per gallon of water.
- Drain and air dry.
- Dishes washed in a dishwasher will have most pathogens removed by the hot water and detergent. Using the heated drying cycle of the dishwasher increases the destruction of pathogens.

Note: *Sanitizing dishes is most important if there is illness in the family or the dishes and utensils are used by a person who is at high risk for foodborne illness due to a weakened immune system.*

Developed by OSU Master Food Preserver Program



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