



# COOKING

Cooking food properly will help make sure that any harmful bacteria are killed. Eating food that isn't properly cooked could give you food poisoning.

## **Making sure food is hot enough**

To test if food has been properly cooked, check that it's steaming hot all the way through. This means it's hot enough for steam to come out.

Cut open the food with a small knife so you can check that it's steaming hot in the middle. Generally, if food is steaming hot in the middle, it will be steaming hot all the way through. But if you're cooking a very large dish, you might need to check it in more than one place, because some parts of the dish might not be hot enough.

Cooking thermometers or temperature probes can be an easy way to check if food is cooked properly. The food should reach a temperature of 70°C for more than 2 minutes in the middle or thickest part.

Some types of food change colour when they're cooked. Looking at colour is especially useful for checking meat.

## **Checking if meat has been properly cooked**

It's very important to make sure that poultry, pork and meat products such as burgers, sausages and kebabs are properly cooked all the way through.

If you're checking a burger, sausage, or a portion of chicken or pork, cut into the middle and check there is no pink meat left. The meat should also be steaming hot in the middle.

If you're checking a whole chicken or other bird, pierce the thickest part of the leg (between the drumstick and the thigh) with a clean knife or skewer until the juices run out. The juices shouldn't have any pink or red in them.

Kidneys, liver and other types of offal should be cooked thoroughly until they're steaming hot all the way through.

## Rare meat

It's fine to eat steaks and other whole cuts of beef and lamb rare, as long as the outside has been properly cooked or 'sealed'. Steaks are usually sealed in a frying pan over a high heat.

It's important to seal meat to kill any bacteria that might be on the outside. You can tell that a piece of meat has been properly sealed because all the outside will have changed colour.

It's OK to serve beef and lamb joints rare too, as long as the joint is a single piece of meat, not a rolled joint (made from different pieces of meat rolled together).

But pork joints and rolled joints shouldn't be served rare. To check these types of joint are properly cooked, put a skewer into the centre of the joint. The juices shouldn't have any pink or red in them.

Remember, you shouldn't eat these types of meat rare:

- poultry
- pork
- burgers, sausages, chicken nuggets
- rolled joints
- kebabs

This is because these types of meat can have bacteria all the way through them, not just on the outside. So if they aren't properly cooked then any bacteria in the meat might not be killed.

## Leftovers

If you have cooked food that you aren't going to eat straight away, cool it as quickly as possible (ideally within one to two hours) and then store it in the fridge. Make sure your fridge is between 0°C and 5°C.

Don't keep leftovers for longer than two days.

When you reheat food, make sure that it's steaming hot all the way through. If the food is only warm it might not be safe to eat. Don't reheat food more than once.

About a third of the food we buy ends up being thrown away and most of this could have been eaten. One of the main reasons for throwing food away is because people cook and prepare too much. Try to cook only as much as you need. But if you do cook too much, using leftovers is a good way to reduce the amount of food you waste and save money too, as long as you do it safely.

## Aluminium pans

It's best not to use aluminium pans, baking trays and foil, or other cookware made of aluminium, to cook (or store) foods that are highly acidic, such as:

- tomatoes
- rhubarb
- cabbage
- many soft fruits

This is because aluminium can affect the taste of these sorts of food.

Studies have shown that using aluminium cookware adds little to the amount of aluminium we take in through our food.