

Recent Consumer Research and Unified Analysis: Study Conducted for the Partnership for Food Safety Education

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Safe Food Handling: American Attitudes and Behavior Survey

- Survey conducted by Porter Novelli for the Partnership for Food Safety Education in 2004
- National mail survey (n = 4,907)
- Collected information on consumer knowledge and use of recommended food handling practices



Clean



Consumers' Knowledge and Use of Recommended Practices for "Clean"

Practice	Seen/ Heard	Always Do	Gap
Thoroughly wash and sanitize surfaces used for raw meat, poultry, or seafood before using for fresh fruits and vegetables	94%	76%	-18
Wash hands with warm water and soap <u>after</u> handling raw meat, poultry, seafood, or eggs	85%	65%	-20
Wash fresh fruits and vegetables under cool running tap water	80%	61%	-19
Wash hands with warm water and soap <u>before</u> handling raw meat, poultry, seafood, or eggs	74%	53%	-21

Source: PFSE (2004).



Separate



Consumers' Knowledge and Use of Recommended Practices for "Separate"

Practice	Seen/ Heard	Always Do	Gap
When at home, store fresh fruits and vegetables separate from raw meat, poultry, and seafood	92%	77%	-15
Never place cooked food on a plate that has previously held raw meat, poultry, or seafood	91%	73%	-18
Wash cutting boards, utensils, and countertops with warm water and soap after preparing each food	94%	67%	-27
Use separate cutting boards for fresh fruits and vegetables and raw meat, poultry, and seafood	71%	47%	-24



Cook



Consumers' Knowledge and Use of Recommended Practices for "Cook"

Practice	Seen/ Heard	Always Do	Gap
Cook eggs until the yolk and whites are not runny	70%	51%	-19
Bring sauces, soups, and gravy to a rolling boil when heating	65%	48%	-17
Use a food thermometer for checking the internal temperature of meat and poultry when cooking	78%	31%	-47
To prevent listeriosis, thoroughly heat all ready-to-serve meats such as lunch meats and hot dogs	35%	29%	-6

Source: PFSE (2004)



Chill



Consumers' Knowledge and Use of Recommended Practices for "Chill"

Practice	Seen/ Heard	Always Do	Gap
Maintain refrigerator at 33-41°F	64%	56%	-8
Defrost frozen foods in the refrigerator, cold water, or microwave	89%	53%	-36
Use refrigerated leftovers within 3 to 4 days	78%	43%	-35
Discard perishable foods left at room temperature for more than two hours	71%	38%	-33
Use a refrigerator thermometer	57%	35%	-22

Source: PFSE (2004).



Recent Research on Consumer Food Handling Practices

- FDA/FSIS Food Safety Surveys (1988–2006)
- Survey of Consumer Storage Practices for RTE Foods (RTI, TSU, & KSU, 2005)
- Safe Food Handling: American Attitudes and Behavior Survey (PFSE, 2004)
- Focus group research conducted by the PFSE, FSIS, FDA, and CDC
- Meta-analysis on food safety knowledge and practices (Patil, Cates, Morales, 2005)
- Review of food safety studies (Redmond and Griffith, 2003)



Characteristics of Consumers Who Are More Likely to Engage in Risky Food Handling Practices

- Young adults (ages 18–29)
- Males
- Individuals with more than a high school education
- Individuals with relatively higher incomes
- For seniors, individuals who live alone/are not married
- Some regional differences



Do Consumers Follow Recommended Food Handling Practices?

- Survey results may overstate actual behavior because of social desirability bias; more observation studies are needed to measure actual behavior
- There is a gap between what consumers know and what they do when cooking at home
- Consumers lack consistency in following the recommended practices
- Consumers have improved their food handling practices, especially for clean and separate, but the job is not done yet!



Areas for Improvement

- Handling of fresh produce
- Using a food thermometer
- Safely defrosting raw meat and poultry
- Using a refrigerator thermometer
- Safely storing refrigerated foods
- Prevention practices for listeriosis among at-risk populations



How to Have a Greater Impact on Reducing Foodborne Illness

- Bacterial pathogens most commonly implicated in serious illness requiring hospitalization
 - *Salmonella*
 - *Campylobacter*
- Subpopulations most likely to be hospitalized
 - Infants
 - Older adults (50+)
 - older adults with chronic illnesses that can be immunocompromising
 - older adults who live alone

