How do you know when food is cooked completely?

Cooking food to the proper temperature is not only the key to serving delicious meals, but it is also essential to serving safe meals. Most people like their food prepared a certain way and have their own idea of “doneness”. This way of cooking is dangerous when working with meats, poultry and fish. A more reliable way to determine correct food temperatures is using a digital cooking thermometer. This wise investment will help prevent undercooking and potential food borne illnesses.

Fish:
- Internal temperature of fish is 145°.
- The fish should turn from a translucent to milky white color when done. Fish should be flaky.
- In general, cook fish ten minutes per inch of thickness.

Beef Steaks:
- Internal temperature of meat is 145°.
- Cut the thickest part of meat; if slightly pink inside, it is ready to serve.

Ground Beef:
- Internal temperature of meat is 160°.
- Make sure it is cooked completely with no redness.

Pork:
- Internal temperature of meat is 160°.

Eggs:
- Cook until 160°.
- The egg white is set and the yolk thickens with no visible liquid.

Casseroles:
- Internal temperature is 165°.
How do I Store Leftovers?

- Be sure to refrigerate all leftovers soon after meals. Leaving foods out at room temperature for two hours or more increases the risk of food poisoning.
- Store foods in smaller, or more shallow, containers to allow for faster cooling.
- Use glass or plastic storage containers.
- Store cooked meat, poultry, and fish separately from other cooked and ready-to-eat foods.
- Consume leftovers within a few days of refrigeration (refer back to “How long should foods be stored”).
- If you have any doubt about the safety of the food, throw it out. Never taste test food!

Poultry:
- Internal temperature of poultry breast is 170°. The juice running out of the thickest part of the breast should be clear, not pink.
- For ground poultry, internal temperature is 165°.
- For whole poultry, internal temperature is 180°.

For *pasta, rice, and vegetables*, insufficient cooking won’t make you sick, but following these directions will help these foods taste better and increase their nutritional value.

Pasta:
- Taste, it should be soft.

Rice:
- When the cooking liquid is completely absorbed.

Vegetables:
- Potatoes should be easily stabbed with a fork.
- The outer leaves from artichokes and brussel sprouts should easily tear off.
- Taste all other vegetables for doneness.

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Updated May 2007