



## Don't be "Myth"-Led by These Food Safety Myths

By Alice Henneman  
UNL Extension Educator  
and Joyce Jensen  
Lincoln-Lancaster County  
Health Department

Last issue we covered a few food safety myths. Here are some additional ones and the facts you need to know!

**MYTH 1:** If you let a food sit out more than two hours, you can make it safe by heating it really hot!

**FACT 1: Some bacteria, such as staphylococcus (staph), produce toxins not destroyed by high cooking temperatures.**

**MYTH 2:** If a hamburger is brown in the middle, it is cooked to a safe internal temperature.

**FACT 2: 1 out of 4 hamburgers turns brown before it has been cooked to a**

**safe internal temperature.** Research shows some ground beef patties look done at internal temperatures as low as 135° F.

The only way to tell if a hamburger has been cooked to a safe internal temperature is to use a food thermometer!

**MYTH 3:** Meat and poultry should be washed before cooking.

**FACT 3: Washing meat and poultry is NOT necessary or recommended.**

Washing increases the danger of cross-contamination, spreading bacteria present on the surface of meat and poultry to:

- ready-to-eat foods
- kitchen utensils
- counter surfaces

Cooking meat and poultry to the recommended internal temperature will make them safe to eat.

**MYTH 4:** We should be

scared of eating almost everything!

**FACT 4: "... the American food supply continues to be among the safest in the world."**

(Source: Robert E. Brackett, Ph.D., Director, Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, Food and Drug Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Nov. 15, 2006 at [http://help.senate.gov/Hearings/2006\\_11\\_15/Brackett.pdf](http://help.senate.gov/Hearings/2006_11_15/Brackett.pdf))

Proper food handling helps assure food is safe to eat. Four steps follow:

- 1) Clean—Wash hands and surfaces often.
- 2) Separate—Don't cross-contaminate.
- 3) Cook—cook to proper temperatures.
- 4) Chill—Refrigerate promptly.

**Remember: When in doubt ... TOSS IT OUT!!!**

For a PowerPoint presentation related to this material, go to <http://lancaster.unl.edu/food/myths.shtml>

By guest columnist Mary Torell, Public Information Officer, Nebraska Department of Agriculture, Poultry & Egg Division

## Easter Celebration

Easter is a happy time, a time to celebrate the coming of spring and the new life that's all around us in the flowers, trees, animals and birds. Along with the deep religious meaning, it's also an occasion for gifts and games, and many of these involve Easter eggs. The egg has always been a symbol of new life and people believed eggs given at this season would bring good luck. It's been a custom to color, decorate and exchange eggs for hundreds of years. While eggs are good eating at any time, Easter is the season to enjoy them as gifts and special treats.

### Egg Handling and Safety Tips

There are some important safe handling methods to remember this time of year when you're decorating, cooking or hiding those eggs since eggs are handled a great deal more than usual around Easter. Remember to:

- Wash your hands thoroughly with hot soapy water and rinse them before handling the eggs when cooking, cooling, dyeing and hiding them.
- Be sure and inspect the eggs before purchasing them, making sure they are not dirty or cracked. Dangerous bacteria may enter a cracked egg.
- Store eggs in their original cartons in the refrigerator.
- If you're having an Easter egg hunt, consider hiding places carefully. Avoid areas where the eggs might come into contact with pets, wild animals, birds, reptiles, insects or lawn chemicals.
- Make sure you find all the eggs you've hidden and then refrigerate them. Discard cracked eggs.
- As long as the eggs are NOT out of refrigeration over two hours, they will be safe to eat.
- Do not eat eggs that have been out of refrigeration more than two hours.
- If you are planning to use colored eggs as decorations, (for centerpieces, etc.) where the eggs will be out of refrigeration for many hours or several days, discard them after they have served their decorative purpose.

### Egg Salad Week

Each year, for the full week beginning the Monday after Easter, the U.S. egg industry observes Egg Salad Week. The week's purpose is the enjoyment of all the tasty recipes prepared with cooked and colored eggs. The occasion is meant to be fun, but is underscored with a serious intent. Since, at this time of year, refrigerators across America are stocked with Easter eggs (which should be used within a week of hard-cooking) the observance is both timely and appropriate.

### Tangy Raspberry Salad

(Serves 6)

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/3 cup water
- 3/4 cup raspberry vinegar
- 1 tablespoon orange juice
- 3/4 teaspoon finely minced garlic
- salt to taste
- pepper to taste
- 8 cups loosely packed, torn mixed salad greens (12 oz.)
- 1-1/2 cups fresh or frozen (no sugar added) raspberries
- 1 tablespoon chopped green onion with top
- 6 hard-cooked eggs, quartered



In a jar with a tight-fitting lid, shake together oil, water, vinegar, orange juice, garlic and seasonings. Set aside while preparing salad or refrigerate.

Place salad greens in a large bowl. Add raspberries, onions and eggs. Shake dressing again; pour over salad. Gently toss until ingredients are evenly coated with dressing.

Recipe Source: American Egg Board

For more free egg recipes, egg decorating tips, or information related to eggs and food safety, go to [www.nebraskapoultry.org](http://www.nebraskapoultry.org) or contact Mary Torell at [mtorell2@unl.edu](mailto:mtorell2@unl.edu) or 472-0752.



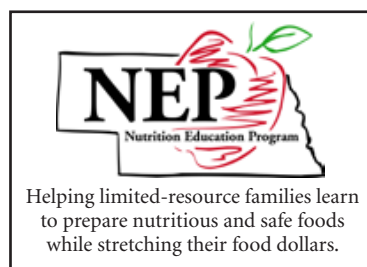
When measuring the temperature of a thin food, such as a hamburger patty, pork chop or chicken breast, an "instant-read" digital thermometer should be used, if possible.

If using an "instant-read" dial thermometer, the probe must be inserted in the side of the food so the entire sensing area (usually 2-3 inches) is positioned through the center of the food.

### USDA Recommended Safe Minimum Internal Temperatures

• Steaks & Roasts	145° F
• Fish	145° F
• Pork	160° F
• Ground Beef	160° F
• Egg Dishes	160° F
• Chicken Breasts	165° F
• Whole Poultry	165° F

## Vegetables: More than Just a "Side Dish"



Mardel Meinke  
UNL Extension Associate

Vegetables are often called a "side dish" on the menu. At home they are often a quick addition after the "main dish" or meat dish is planned. There are many ways to go about planning meals for the family. In the United States, we often plan our meals around the meat/protein meal component. In other areas of the world, including the Asian culture, meals are usually planned around the vegetables. They often serve a variety of vegetables with small amounts of meat or stock added for flavor. Hispanic and Middle Eastern cultures include a variety of vegetables, including beans, which are high in protein and contain many important nutrients found in vegetables.

The nutrients in vegetables include vitamins, minerals and phyto-chemicals (plant chemicals) our body needs. They often contain not only Vitamin A and C, but are rich in folate and potassium. They

satisfy hunger while adding few calories because they are rich in dietary fiber and water. Perhaps the greatest thing about vegetables is the color and eye appeal they add to our meal. Think deep rich colors such as deep red tomatoes, dark green peppers and bright orange carrots. Deeply colored vegetables are the most nutrient-dense, but even the white vegetables, like onions and garlic contain important phyto-chemicals.

For adults and children, 6 years and older, approximately 2½ cups of vegetables are recommended daily. Many of us don't reach that goal. So, we ask "How do I eat more vegetables and at the same time add more color, texture and taste to my food?" Here are some suggestions for incorporating vegetables into our daily fare.

**SALADS** are one of the easiest ways. Make the salad your main dish by including a variety of greens—Romaine, red leaf lettuce, spinach, cabbage, celery tops and many other choices. Iceberg lettuce contains few nutrients, so look for dark leafy greens. Then add other veggies (and even fruits) to your salad for color and textures. Add some colorful legumes, perhaps red beans or black beans or kidney beans. A low-fat or no-fat dressing can top off your salad.

**SOUPS** and vegetables are a natural. Go beyond

potatoes and carrots and add broccoli, cauliflower, squash, sweet potatoes, peppers or other vegetables to your soup. Add golden lentils or leftover mashed potatoes to thicken your soup and add nutrients. If using canned soups, make the soup much more appealing and increase the number of servings by adding extra vegetables.

**CASSEROLES AND SKILLET MEALS** (combination foods) already include a meat for protein and usually potatoes, pasta or rice. Adding a vegetable or two enhances the texture, color and flavor. Frozen vegetable mixtures work great in combination foods as well as fresh, frozen or canned veggies. To add color, drain a can of diced tomatoes and add to most any combination dish. Stir-fry vegetables are just one type of skillet meal. Kids and adults will enjoy trying some new vegetables, such as snow peas, bok choy, jicama or water chestnuts.

**SNACKS** can consist of all kinds of vegetables such as baby carrots, celery, cucumber, broccoli, tomatoes, cauliflower, snap peas or peppers. The secret to eating veggies for a snack is probably having the vegetables washed and ready to "grab and go" in the refrigerator. Including vegetables for a snack is an excellent way to boost your consumption, closer to the 2½ cups recommended daily.