

Kitchen Confidential

Below are the questions (for your convenience) from the Safety Zone quiz (page 7), and the answer key.

QUESTIONS

1. Poultry isn't safe to eat unless it's cooked to at least 180 degrees F.
2. You should wash any fruit with a peel.
3. After touching raw food, wipe your hands with a dishtowel.
4. You can microwave leftovers in any plastic container.
5. Leave hot food out until it's reached room temperature, and then refrigerate it.
6. It's important to use separate cutting boards to cut up meat and vegetables.

ANSWERS

1. **False.** For decades, safety-conscious cooks kept their roasts in the oven until the meat hit this magic number. Any lower, people thought, and germs such as *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter*, and bird flu might not be killed. Recently, though, the U.S. Food Safety and Inspection Service recommended a minimum internal temperature of 165 degrees F for poultry. So no more desert-dry Thanksgiving dinners!
2. **True.** Think that orange is pristine? The juicy flesh might be, but the rind isn't, and germs can transfer to your hands as you peel it. Wash all produce under running water—and scrub tough-skinned items. That includes homegrown or organic items; bacteria aren't choosy about where they live. Even when the label says “prewashed,” you should still give produce a quick rinse before you dig in.
Washing isn't foolproof. For example, scrubbing and sudsing wouldn't have prevented the recent fresh-spinach scare. That was caused by the bacterium *E. coli*, which doesn't wash off; only cooking the food hot enough to kill that germ will make the food safe. Still, a little soap and water doesn't hurt!
3. **False.** If it's used repeatedly, a dishtowel can be one of the dirtiest items in the house! Wiping with it just transfers some germs to the towel, where they can live until hitching a ride on the next unsuspecting pair of hands. When working with raw food, wash your hands with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds.
4. **False.** Some containers, such as those for take-out food and margarine, aren't good for reheating. At high heat they can melt or deform, and that can result in accidental burns. Containers not meant for use in microwave ovens can also leak chemicals into food, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Use only microwave-safe containers, and chuck everything else in the recycling bin or trash can.
5. **False.** You'll need a calculator to count the germs that take up residence! Forgot to put away the lasagna before you started watching that DVD? Don't take risks with your health. The rule of thumb is: Don't leave hot food out for more than two hours, especially if it contains egg. Similar rules apply to refrigerated dairy products, such as cheese. If leftovers aren't eaten within five days, toss them too.
6. **True.** Use different cutting boards for meat and vegetables, to avoid the spread of bacteria.