

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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### Is Eating Chicken Dangerous?

The government recently released its report on preparations for avian flu. We need to be thinking about what we will do if people here start getting sick. We'll need to have food and water stored at home. We'll need to stay home and avoid close contact with other people. Companies, schools and offices need their plans too. But all of these are for *when* people start getting sick here. So far, we are not one of the countries that has had any human illness from bird flu.

So, what should we do now? Should we stop eating chicken or eggs? No! There is no reason to stop eating chicken, or turkey, duck or goose either. There is no reason to not eat eggs or foods containing eggs. Most of our poultry are raised and eggs are produced indoors. That means there is less chance that they will catch the virus from wild birds. Most viruses that live in chickens and ducks don't make people sick. Most don't even make the birds sick! Almost all the people who have gotten sick were raising live chickens or ducks. They handled birds, especially sick birds, directly. They did not get sick because they bought prepared chicken.

What we should do now, the same as always, is make sure that we cook these foods completely. If you don't have a food thermometer to check the temperature of your chicken, go get one! No matter how much experience you have, no matter how many years you have been cooking chicken, you need to use a thermometer to be sure it is done. Eyeballs are not enough anymore.

When people actually check the temperature of cooking meat, they find that

about 20% of the meat that looks done is actually not hot enough in the middle to be safe. They also find that some meat that does not look done really is hot enough, and is overcooked and tough by the time it “looks done”. The temperature in the thickest part of the meat must be at least 180° F. If you are only cooking chicken breasts, they will be safe at 170° F. Use a thermometer to be sure!

Why worry about the temperature of cooked chicken? Because the virus that causes the bird flu will be killed if the chicken is cooked properly! Even if by some chance you did happen to get a chicken that had the virus on it, if you cook it well enough, you’ll kill the virus. If you cook contaminated eggs until they are no longer soft or runny, you’ll kill the virus.

You also need to be sure you don’t spread the chicken juices around the kitchen. There is no need to wash or rinse a chicken before you cook it. You can clean inside a whole bird before you put it in the roasting pan, but there’s no benefit to washing it. The heat of cooking will kill anything that’s on it, and washing is only likely to spread the juices. Simply remove it from the wrapper and cut it up. Wrap the plastic tray, the clear plastic and the pad that caught the juices in a plastic grocery or garbage bag. Tie it shut, and put it directly in the garbage can.

If any juices dripped on the counter, wipe them up first with a paper towel. Once the chicken is in the pan and cooking, wash the counter, sink and utensils you used with hot soapy water. Rinse well and let it all dry. If you cut the chicken on a cutting board, spray it with some diluted bleach. You only need 3/4 teaspoon of bleach in a quart of water. Spray it on and let it dry. The hot soapy water and the bleach will take care of any bacteria and most viruses. Then sit down and enjoy your chicken dinner.

This week’s recipe is for chicken wings with a definitely Florida flair. If you don’t

have fresh lemon juice, the bottled kind will do as well. Serve with carrot and celery sticks and grape tomatoes.

### Lemon Chicken Wings

3 lbs. chicken wings	½ C honey
3 Tbsp corn starch	½ tsp ground ginger
½ tsp salt	¼ tsp or more of pepper
¾ C cold water	⅓ C lemon juice
¼ C soy sauce	

Preheat oven to 400° F. Clip wing tips. Place in single layer on rack in baking pan. Bake for 10 minutes, turning once. Combine all other ingredients in saucepan. Stir until smooth. Heat, stirring constantly until mixture thickens and boils. Stir and boil 3 minutes. Remove chicken from oven, pour off any drippings, and return chicken to pan without the rack. Brush mixture over wings and continue baking, turning and glazing, until wings are tender and the temperature in the meat reaches 180° F. (Don't let the tip of the thermometer touch bone as you read it.)

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