

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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You could start an argument in some families just around which way is the best for cooking chicken. Susie wants it grilled plain, Uncle Henry knows the best way is barbequed, Grandmomma still wants hers fried, and young Johnny only eats chicken nuggets. On top of balancing all of those requests, Mom still has to try to figure out if each piece is done enough to be safe. What do you mean, wiggling the leg isn't enough? Is it 180° or 185° F for the breast? What was the right temperature for the drumsticks? Why on earth did they need different temperatures, it all came from the same bird, didn't it?!

Well, at least one part of the confusion has been eliminated recently. The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) just announced that it and its special advisory committee on food safety have determined that all parts of the chicken will be safe to eat if they are cooked to 165° F. The previous recommendations were that the breast needed to be hotter because of the thickness of the meat, and that whole birds needed even more heat because they had a lot more skin on them.

No matter how good it tastes, that skin is a problem. It has a lot more fat than the meat, so that's a problem for anyone worried about heart disease or weight. And the skin, since it's the outside of the animal, collects and holds lots of bacteria. We don't buy beef and pork with the skin on, so we get a lot fewer bacteria from those meats.

Now however, the researchers at FSIS have cooked and tested enough chickens

to say with confidence that *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter* and the virus that causes avian flu are all killed by the time the meat gets to 165° F. All the meat has to get to 165° F, so you better use a meat thermometer to check it! Check the breast, in the thickest part. Check the thigh, deep in the muscle. Check the drumsticks. Whatever part of the chicken you are cooking, use the thermometer to be sure it's hot enough.

You might be surprised to find that your chicken is not as dry and tough as it used to be when you used the wiggle-the-leg test. Many people discover they've been over-cooking meat "just to be safe". The problem is that sometimes pink meat is safe, and sometimes meat that looks 'done' is not safe. Only the thermometer can tell.

Besides using the thermometer, FSIS reminds us all to keep things Clean, Separate and Chilled. Clean means washing our hands, the utensils and the countertops frequently. The recommendation to rinse the chicken before we cook it is no longer used. Rinsing mostly splashed bacteria around the kitchen and contaminated the sink. When the chicken is cooked, all the bacteria on it are killed. But bacteria in the sink can recontaminate anything else they touch.

Separate means to use a different plate for the cooked meat than you used for the raw chicken. One plate takes it to the grill, another brings it back to the table. Don't let chicken juice get on other foods, cutting boards or utensils. Don't use the same towel to wipe up a drip and dry a dish. Keep raw and cooked foods apart. Keep sauce for serving separate from marinade or grilling sauce.

And Chill means to keep foods cold enough, all the time. Refrigerate foods as soon as you get home from the store. Put leftovers in the refrigerator as soon as possible. Thaw frozen foods in the refrigerator.

Here's a cool chicken salad that doesn't require any more cooking. Just be sure

the chicken has been refrigerated since it was cooked to 165° F. A mixture of red and green bell pepper adds color too.

### Island Chicken Salad

2 C cooked and diced chicken	2 Tbsp chopped bell pepper
1 8-oz can crushed pineapple, canned in juice	1/4 C low fat mayonnaise
Lettuce leaves or mixed salad greens	½ tsp curry powder

Drain the pineapple. Combine chicken, pineapple, pepper, curry powder and mayonnaise in bowl. Cover and chill. Rinse lettuce leaves or greens under running water and shake or pat dry. Place in serving bowl, mound chicken to top, and serve.

Serves 6.

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