

## **PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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### Enjoy your Chicken

Florida has been part of an ongoing Salmonella outbreak since the end of last year. So far there are almost 600 people sick across the country. Only 4 people in Florida got sick, last October, and there have not been any more cases here since then. But with summer heat coming on, we do need to be extra careful handling chicken.

People are still getting sick in other states from the same strain of Salmonella, so the CDC is pretty sure that all the cases are related. There were still new illnesses as recently as last month. What is unusual about this particular strain of Salmonella is that it is resistant to several common antibiotics.

Most of the illnesses are on the West Coast, mainly California. The cases are all linked to cooked rotisserie chicken of the Foster Farms® brand. Most were sold by Costco. Whole rotisserie chickens and rotisserie chicken salad, soup and leg quarters from the same company and locations were all found to have the same kind of Salmonella. All the chicken has been recalled, and the Best By date is long since past. But USDA is concerned that some people have frozen the chicken and might still have it in the freezer. The bacteria won't grow in the freezer, but they won't die either. They could still make you sick when the chicken is thawed. If you have any of that brand frozen since last year, don't use it. Return it to the store, or call Costco at 800-774-2678 to find out if what you have might be part of the problem batches.

All chicken might be carrying Salmonella, but that's not a reason to stop eating it. Handled and cooked properly, all the bacteria will be killed. Steps for safe handling are very much the same all year long, no matter where we live. But in summer heat, our leeway is much smaller. When the temperature is 90° F or above, chicken and other cooked foods only have one hour at room temperature to still be considered safe. That means we have to work quickly and carefully to be safe.

Here are the most important things we can do to be able to still enjoy our grilled, barbequed, rotisserie, baked, fried, stewed or however-you-want-to cook-it chicken!

One: Keep it chilled. Carry chicken home from the store in an iced cooler and refrigerate it right away. Remember, you only have 1 hour. Two: Keep raw meats, especially chicken, separated from the

other foods in your grocery cart, in the bags as you carry them home, and in the refrigerator. Three: Thaw frozen chicken in the refrigerator.

Number Four is one that surprises many people: Do NOT wash chicken before you cook it! That only splashes bacteria around your kitchen. USDA found that kitchens where cooks washed the chicken first had more bacteria splattered around, from the sink and counter to aprons and utensils. Just put it straight onto the grill.

Five: Use a thermometer when you cook chicken. The thickest part of the meat (not bone) must reach 165° F to be safe. Digital thermometers read more quickly than dials, but either works. Six: Use 2 plates and sets of utensils for cooking or grilling chicken: one for the raw items, and another for the cooked. There's no sense cooking properly if you're only going to put it back onto raw juices. Ugh!

Six: Chill cooked chicken quickly. Remember that with our summer heat, cooked meats in general and certainly poultry are only safe for 1 hour at room temperature. You can cook and eat in small batches, or cook and refrigerate, just don't leave it sit out. Seven: Reheat cooked chicken to 165° F too. Eight: Wash your hands often, and have a healthy, fun summer!

Here's an easy way to make great-tasting chicken. Serve with a big green salad and corn tortillas. Happy summer eating!

#### Mexican Chicken and Rice

1 Tbsp vegetable oil	1 lb boneless, skinless chicken, chopped
1 onion, chopped	1 green pepper, washed and chopped
1 (10 oz pkg) frozen corn, thawed	1 cup low sodium chicken broth
1 cup salsa, mild or hot	¼ tsp chili powder
1 ½ cups instant brown rice	½ cup shredded Cheddar cheese

Heat oil in large skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken, onion and pepper. Cook and stir until chicken is cooked through. Add corn, broth, salsa and chili powder. Bring to boil, stir in rice, cover and remove from heat. Let stand 5 minutes. Fluff with fork, sprinkle with cheese, cover and let stand another 2 minutes. Serves 6.

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