



# Extension News Column

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**Re:** Regular CES column to run Tuesday, July 12, 2011, on Our Town page  
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## Grilling temperatures

This time of year, the grill is king. It is one of our favorite ways to prepare foods in the summer. As you are preparing those juicy steaks and hamburgers, consider how to keep your guests safe from food borne illness. In the past, there was a series of temperatures we had to remember for safe food. Recently the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has updated and simplified their recommendations for safely cooking pork, steaks, roasts, and chops.

Whether you are cooking on the grill or on the stove, cooking to these temperatures will ensure a safe product for your family and guests. There are only 3 numbers to remember: 145 °F for whole meats, 160°F for ground meats, and 165°F for poultry.

The USDA recommends cooking all whole cuts of meat to 145°F as measured with a food thermometer placed in the thickest part of the meat, then allowing the meat to rest for three minutes before carving or consuming.

Ground meats, including ground beef, veal, lamb, and pork, should be cooked to 160°F and do not require a rest time. The safe cooking temperature for all poultry products, including ground chicken and turkey, remains at 165°F.

With a single temperature for all whole cuts of meat and uniform 3-minute stand time, it will be much easier for us to remember and result in safer food preparation. Now there will only be three numbers to remember: 145°F for whole meats, 160°F for ground meats and 165°F for all poultry.

USDA is lowering the recommended safe cooking temperature for whole cuts of pork from 160°F to 145°F and adding a three minute rest time. The safe temperature for cuts of beef, veal, and lamb remains the same at 145°F, but a three-minute rest time has been added as part of its cooking recommendations. Cooking raw pork, steaks, roasts, and chops to 145°F with the addition of a three-minute rest time will result in a product that is both microbiologically safe and at its best quality.

A “rest time” is the amount of time the product remains at the final temperature, after it has been removed from a grill, oven, or other heat source. During the three minutes after meat is removed from the heat source, the temperature remains constant or continues to rise, which destroys pathogens. USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) has determined that it is just as safe to cook cuts of pork to 145°F with a three-minute rest time as it is to cook them to 160°F, the previously recommended temperature, with no rest time. These new cooking temperatures reflect the same standards that are used in federally inspected meat establishments, which rely on the rest time of three minutes to achieve safe pathogen reduction.

The new cooking recommendations help clarify some of our ideas about cooking pork. In the past, many of us have viewed the color pink in pork to be a sign of undercooked meat. If raw pork is cooked to 145°F and allowed to rest for three minutes, it may still be pink, but is safe to eat. The pink color can be due to the cooking method, added ingredients, or other factors. As always, cured pork (e.g., cured ham and cured pork chops) will remain pink after cooking.

What it looks like (color, appearance) is not a reliable indicator of safety. Only by using a food thermometer can you determine if meat has reached a high enough temperature to destroy microorganisms that might be present. Any cooked, uncured red meats – including pork – can be pink, even when the meat has reached a safe internal temperature.

Food thermometers are available at all our grocery stores and discount stores for less than \$10. Invest in one to make sure your meals have no uninvited guests—salmonella, E. coli, or any of their other microorganism friends.

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