Food Safety

Millions of illnesses in this country every year can be traced to foodborne bacteria. And the FDA estimates that two to three percent of these illnesses can lead to secondary long-term illnesses. For example, E. Coli can cause kidney failure in children, Salmonella can lead to arthritis and serious infections, and Listeria can cause meningitis and even stillbirths! These kinds of bacteria are especially scary because they are invisible to the eye and have no smell or texture. Safe food handling is the best way to prevent exposure to them, and it is incredibly simple! There are four simple steps:

Clean—Wash hands for at least 20 seconds with soap before handling food. Also clean all dishes, cutting boards, utensils, etc. after handling food items and before moving onto another food.

Separate—Don’t cross-contaminate. Keep meats, poultry, seafood, eggs and their juices away from ready-to-eat foods.

Cook—to proper temperatures in order to kill harmful bacteria. Use a thermometer and follow USDA guidelines.

Chill—Refrigerate promptly because low temperatures slow the development of bacteria.

For more information: www.fightbac.org

Many holiday food traditions involve eggs, and these can be just as safe! The USDA recommends that people do not eat raw or undercooked eggs or egg products. So if you love your eggnog, raw cookie dough or other homemade treats made with egg, try using pasteurized eggs or egg substitutes. You can enjoy the same taste without the risk of salmonella!

Tips for Safe Eating While at the Office

From the American Dietetic Association:
- Refrigerate sandwiches, fruits, veggies and leftovers.
- Toss your leftovers before you forget. 22 percent of office fridges are cleaned only once a year!
- Take care of the microwave. Cover dishes and clean any spatters from the inside.
- No corporate sponging! Communal sponges are often infested with bacteria. Use a damp paper towel instead.
- Keep the following at your desk: hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, insulated lunch bag with freezer pack, labels for leftovers and fridge and meat thermometers.

For more information: www.fightbac.org
Recipe of the Week

Firehouse Lentil Soup

Makes 6 servings
Total time: 30 minutes
1-1/2 cups uncooked lentils
6 cups water
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
1/2 teaspoon cumin
1/2 teaspoon oregano
2 bay leaves
4 oz can diced green chilies, undrained
1 medium red bell pepper, chopped
1 medium carrot, diced
1/4 cup lime juice 1 tablespoon olive oil

Place the first 6 ingredients in a large pot. Bring to a boil and sim-mer until lentils are tender, about 20 minutes. Remove 1 cup of lentils and puree with green chilies in blender. Add back to the soup. Add bell peppers and carrots and cook until the vegetables are tender. Discard bay leaves before serving and serve with lime juice and olive oil.

Nutrition information: Per serving: 200 calories; 3 g fat; 0 mg cholesterol; 32 g carbohydrates; 13 g protein; 12 g fiber; 80 mg sodium.

For more healthy recipes for you and your family, visit http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov

Top web Sites for Additional Information

www.njaes.rutgers.edu/foodsafety The Rutgers Cooperative Extension’s site features programs, resources and Q & A about food safety.

www.foodsafety.gov Serves as a gateway to food safety information.

www.fda.gov/food The US Food & Drug Administration links to a variety of resources.

www.cdc.gov/foodsafety The Centers for Disease Control offers food safety alerts and other information.

www.fsis.usda.gov The Food Safety and Inspection Service has events, and fact sheets.


Eggs: All They’re Cracked up to Be

Eggs are easy to cook, chew, and digest for kids and seniors alike. They also contain choline, an essential nutrient during pregnancy. In addition to having more protein per serving than most foods, eggs also contain all the amino and fatty acids humans need. They do contain cholesterol but meats contain much more.

Eggs have no carbohydrates or trans-fat, which are far worse for health. Because they are low-calorie and dense in nutrients they can often aid in weight control. They are the most affordable source of protein on the market. So get crackin’ with an egg!

Source: Egg Nutrition Center, www.enc-online.org