



Ontario Home Economics Association

Ask a Professional Home Economist

For Immediate Release

Shop Smart for Safe Food

by Mary Carver, P.H.Ec.

We all love a hot summer; still, soaring temperatures increase the risk of becoming infected with a foodborne illness.

Here are a few shopping tips to help keep food purchases safe from harmful bacteria and reduce your risk of contracting a foodborne illness - in any weather:

- Make your grocery stop, your last errand before you head home.
- Consider using a hand sanitizer before and after pushing the grocery cart.
- Take a cooler or an insulated bag with a frozen pack in your car to carry meat, fish, dairy and fresh produce home from the store - especially in hot weather.
- Consider carrying groceries in your air-conditioned car, rather than in a hot trunk.
- Choose fruits and vegetables with the fewest cuts and bruises. Bacteria can thrive in such damaged spots.
- Despite the temptation, avoid sampling unwashed fruits or vegetables. Bear in mind that several people handled those grapes before you.
- Keep reusable grocery bags clean. Wash bags frequently in warm, soapy water and dedicate specific bags for fruits and veggies only. Reusable grocery bags are for food only. Find other bags to serve as diaper bags or to carry gym clothes or pet supplies.
- Shop often to avoid overstuffing the refrigerator. Cold air (4°C/40°F or colder) needs to circulate above and beneath food to keep it safe. You will have fewer perishables to spoil if the power fails in a heat wave.

- Separate raw meat, poultry and seafood from other foods in the shopping cart, in grocery bags and again in your refrigerator. Despite efforts to reduce plastic, a small plastic bag inside a reusable bag is a smart choice to reduce the risk of meat, fish or poultry juices contaminating other food.
- Pick up refrigerated and frozen items last on your trip through the grocery store so those items are out of refrigeration for the least possible time.
- For added protection against bacteria, use a disinfectant or a mild bleach solution (1 tsp. bleach per 3 cups water) on countertops where grocery bags were set. While this step may seem excessive to some, just think of the many places those bags touched down before they reached your kitchen counter where you are about to prepare lunch.
- Always wash your hands for at least 20 seconds before handling food and after handling meat, poultry, eggs and seafood.

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Mary Carver, P.H.Ec is an Ottawa-based Professional Home Economist and a member of the Ontario Home Economics Association.

Ontario Home Economics Association (OHEA) a self-regulated body of Professional Home Economists promotes high professional standards among its members so that they may assist families and individuals to achieve and maintain a desirable quality of life. OHEA is a partner in the Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education. For more tips on food safety visit: www.canfightbac.org.

For further information, please contact:

Ontario Home Economics Association
14 Totten Place,
Woodstock, ON N4S 8G7
Tel/Fax: 519-290-1843
Email: nancyohea@rogers.com
Website: www.ohea.on.ca