



Season 1 Episode 1—Invite Food Safety to the Cookout

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Terence Martin

(Intro with music) This is Food Defender podcast with Dr. Terence Martin, food safety and quality specialist at Alabama Extension at Alabama A&M University. Our Food Defender podcast covers everything that comes to food safety. For example, USDA guidelines, FDA guidelines, and just general consumer safety as it pertains to food.

Terence Martin

Welcome to Food Defenders. I am Dr. Terence Martin with Alabama Extension at Alabama A&M University. I'm the food safety and quality specialist here for Extension at Alabama A&M. I have done food safety over 30, 35 years, in the industry as well as here and Extension. I am the guy that answers a lot of questions around food safety and food safety issues.

This podcast is here to give information to our community, as well as any profession concerned about food safety. We'll try to de-bug some of the myths and also state some of the facts around food safety and food safety issues, uh, new regulations. We also will talk about other resources that we have available to the community when it comes around food safety, food safety at home, food safety if you want to develop a new product that you're trying to sell. So, this podcast, we'll be touching bases on a lot of those food safety concerns and issues, as well as understanding maybe an inspection at a restaurant. You may have concerns. Why did they get booked for that?

Terence Martin

So, over 40 million people a year, according to CDC, annually get foodborne illnesses. And so foodborne illness most definitely can be prevented, if we do what we are supposed to do. Whether, preventing cross-contaminations, allergens, prepping food allergens out there. So, there's a lot of things that we need to take a look at. So, this podcast is going to be around, uh, those ideas of food safety, concerning the public, concerning your family, your loved ones, looking at the most susceptible, such as elderly, you know, maybe a grandparent, or mother or father. So, this podcast is going to be about, around those ideas.

Educating and also breaking some of the myths about food safety and food service concerns. So today, with food safety, we're talking about barbecue. We want to make sure we're handling our food products correctly; we keep hot food hot, cold food cold. Transportation of the food from one site to another make sure it's packaged correctly to make sure the temperatures are right.

Terence Martin

Food safety is...one of the biggest things is time and temperature. We want to make sure we kind of monitor when we are out at an event or having a barbecue, making sure that they allow the time that's out there on the table, no more than four hours. If the food's been out there, we want to make sure we keeping check on the time.

Also, when you're doing a barbecue or a picnic, we want to make sure if you're having guests, some people have allergies, you may want to have a product marked that said, hey, this has allergens and peanuts or some type of allergens or milk products or egg products to label if you got food on the table. You want to make sure that you can label those, for people that may have allergies. Worst case scenario, we don't want someone to get an allergic reaction at a, at a cookout. And then you have to, if they don't have an EpiPen or something like that to be able to, have to rush them to the emergency room.

One of the biggest things is we want to make sure that you know, preparing your food product for your activities. Make sure you have a clean, you want to make sure everything's clean. Make sure it is sanitized. You want to make sure you don't cross contaminate, you know, your fruits and vegetables, with your raw products. Those small things we may take for granted, those can lead to disaster.

Terence Martin

So, I want to give an example of a story and cooking I went to, years ago I went to a cookout. Those of us that know that you're always going to have, a lot of us have that one uncle that thinks he's the grill master. A lot of the time the uncle or the person that thinks they're the grill master, they tend to don't think about food safety at hand because they always did something the way they've always done it.

And I can remember being at a cookout and watching the guy that was actually doing the grill. He actually came out of the house with his prepared meats and ready to throw on the grill. And everything looked, looked okay. I'm standing and just watching. And, you know, he goes, he puts his meat on the grill and throughout the, checking it. You know, he's kind of visually- one thing about sometimes you can't really tell the temperature of the meat just by, by the temperature.

So, I'm kind of just observing him. And he goes back in the house with the same container, and I happened to just kind of follow in the house to have a conversation with somebody.

He didn't wash the same container. Then later on I seen him come back out with the same container that he put the raw meat in, had the real raw meat in it, and put the cooked meat in. And I was like, "Man, did you wash that?" He swore up and down that he washed it and I know he didn't. So, you must believe that I didn't eat any of that meat on that day.

Terence Martin

That was one of the things that we talk about grilling ... I get asked all the time that, you know, USDA research that shows that washing your meat is more high-risk contamination in kitchen and such.

So, I get the questions all the time as a food safety specialist is, "Should I wash my meat?" Now, research shows that you should because it reduced the risk... you *shouldn't*, excuse me, you shouldn't wash because you all of a sudden you take risks of contaminating everything around, especially if you don't do a good clean up afterwards, because the splatter. The bacteria can get airborne and all over everything else.

But what I've found over the last years or so, that question is always pop up is "Should I wash my meat?" And normally, culturally I look- I've been looking at culturally--some of my other colleagues who have they have had that same conversation, that lot of the time culturally I say African Americans, they're going to wash their meat prior to barbecuing it or cooking it. You know, even though research says, you know, you shouldn't. But culturally, a lot of time, like African-American, they're going to wash their meat prior to cooking it because their thought process is, 'Okay, I see this meat in a container with a tray that may have a absorbent pad that has blood and fluid in it, so, I'm washing it no matter what.

Terence Martin

You know, so when a person asked me that question, research shows that you shouldn't, shouldn't wash it due to opportunity to cross-contamination or everything else. But culturally, I think, some people the thought of not washing their meat prior to preparing and then cooking it, is not going to happen. But one thing I can say, if you cook it properly to the right temperature and time, it will kill a majority of the bacteria so you should be okay. It's the other thing that research is showing that causes contamination for the splatter in the kitchen, that contaminates other things in your kitchen and maybe even food products, so.

Do as you will, just remind yourself to be, be safe. If you are washing your meats, make sure you do a thorough clean up and sanitize in your kitchen afterwards preparing it. And also just remind yourself to cook it to a thorough temperature that's recommended for whatever meat product, whether it be poultry or beef or whatever you find.

And some of these tips and the temperature can be found on [foodsafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov) or [usda.gov](https://www.usda.gov) if you have any questions or resources. But just be mindful, do your due diligence when it comes to food safety and barbecuing. And also throughout any meal preparation that you prepare for yourself or your family or guests or a friend.

Terence Martin

One of the other things is misconception that, you know, I just got a food virus. Some people don't realize that they've gotten food borne poison, as at such cookout or event. They just think it's just a stomach virus.

So those misconceptions that you've haven't gotten food poison, foodborne poison. You have to make sure you, you think back when you, if you do get sick or have a stomach diarrhea or nauseous stomach, 'Hey, what did I eat? How long was that food sitting there? Was it at the right temperature? Was it cool at the right temperature?'

Those things you need to take in consideration. That misconception, "Well, I just got a stomach virus" could actually be a foodborne illness that you may have gotten from eating at someone's house or maybe you maybe have cross-contamination at your own house. So, let's be aware, cognizant of those things.

One of the other tips doing barbecue, make sure you have a meat thermometer, that way you can take the temperature, of your meat, you know, like a chicken make sure it's 165, 165 degrees, make sure it's at the right temperature and your ground beef, your hamburgers, make sure they cook thoroughly. You may have like a family reunion, may have elderly people there. You want to make sure those temperatures are met as a requirement to help prevent microbial growth and foodborne illnesses. One main thing we don't want to do is put those younger people and our elderly or older adults at risk due to not meeting the maximum temperature when it comes to cooking.

Terence Martin

These are some good tips that we should all follow, tips that we should most definitely take into consideration. And one of the main tips, I think we think back when we had the Covid epidemic, we went back and seemed like everybody had to go back and re-, learn how to re-wash their hands.

Should always make sure you're washing your hands much as possible. If you're preparing food or if you're getting ready to handle food, make sure you're washing your hand, you know, hot soapy water if you have that available, if not cold water and soap. And if you happen to be at a park somewhere, make sure you have hand sanitizer if you don't have access to hand washing, you know, to be able to wash your hands. Because your hands are the most easy way to cross-contaminate and contaminate food products and utensils. Those things can cross-contaminate and transfer micro bacteria, which can cause foodborne illnesses.

One other thing that, one other tip on barbecuing, I think a lot of times what we want to think about those, those great barbecuers, the ones that's out there that think they can barbecue, we have to make sure when handling your seasonings, those marinades, those type things, you have to make sure, like your marinades, make sure they're at the right- they stay cooled. And don't cross contaminate raw meat and then turn around, put it back on your cooked product. Or you're taking your raw meat and then turn around, putting your cooked meat back in the raw container without cleaning it properly.

I also wanted a little tip that I always know, some people don't seem to think about, is when you're using your seasoning. A lot of that you're touching your raw meats and then you are handling your container, your seasoning. A lot of the time you have those contamination, cross-contamination from your raw meats like salt, your pepper, your seasoning. You want to make sure after you do that, during preparation, make sure you go

back and wipe those down and sanitize those containers because the next person may come and touch it and put it on their cooked food, and they taste tested with their raw hand, now they're picking up the piece of chicken that has been cooked that's at risk right there, cross-contamination. Those small things right there that we don't tend to think about when preparing, especially like barbecue and seasoning, you might you want to make sure you go back and wipe down those ingredients at the same time.

So those are some good tips and for you to have a great jump start activities, family reunions, cookouts. Keep food safety at the forefront. Because one thing you don't want to do is get a group of people or your family, your friends, uh, sick due to you not being food safety conscious.

Terence Martin

(Outro with music) Once again, this is Dr. Terence Martin with Food Defenders for Alabama Extension at Alabama A&M. Stay safe and knowledgeable of what's going on around you...everything food.