Safe recipe style guide:
Shaping food safety behaviours

Your mission as recipe writers, food journalists, bloggers and chefs: To create recipes that encourage everyone to follow food safety steps at home.

Health Canada · Santé Canada

Canada

Health Canada is the federal department responsible for helping the people of Canada maintain and improve their health. Health Canada is committed to improving the lives of all of Canada's people and to making this country's population among the healthiest in the world as measured by longevity, lifestyle and effective use of the public health care system.

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About foodborne illness

In Canada, **1 in 8** or **4 million people** get sick each year from eating contaminated food. **This is called foodborne illness.**

1 in 8
(4 million people)
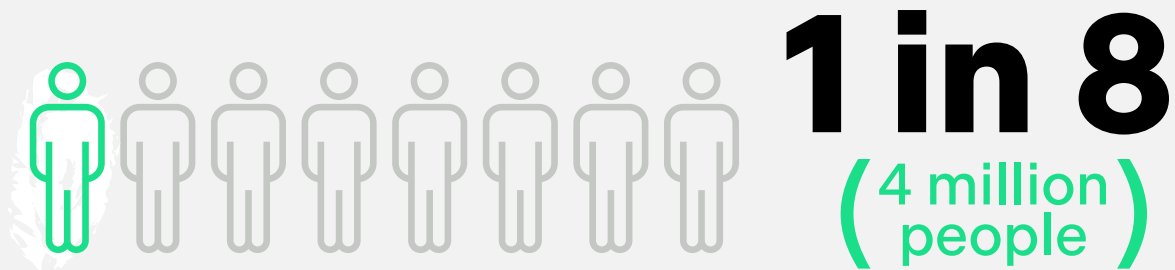
Most foodborne illness is preventable with **proper food handling**.

You can **prevent** many illnesses and even deaths by following simple food safety steps.

The safe recipe style guide and why we need it

Research has shown that when food safety instructions are incorporated directly into recipes, consumers are more likely to follow them. Consumers play a key role in preventing foodborne illness and keeping themselves and their families healthy.

The style guide provides you with an easy and flexible way to add food safety tips to your recipes on your blog, article, cookbook, social media channels, etc. Use the style guide as it suits your recipes and your needs. It is voluntary.

By using the style guide for your recipes, you will be helping people improve their food safety practices at home. This may help reduce the risk of people getting sick because of foodborne illness.

The recipes incorporate food safety messages from these 4 key areas:

Clean:
wash hands and surfaces often, rinse vegetables and fruit

Separate:
don't cross contaminate from raw to cooked food

Cook:
cook foods to proper temperatures and check to be sure

Chill:
keep cold food cold by refrigerating or freezing promptly

Health Canada's Safe recipe style guide: Shaping food safety behaviours was inspired by the Partnership for Food Safety Education's (the Partnership) Safe Recipe Style Guide (2019) from the United States. We are pleased to collaborate with the Partnership to help reduce foodborne illness in North America.

Style guide food safety tips
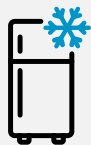
This section provides concise wording for the food safety tips. It breaks them down into the 4 key areas: **clean**, **separate**, **cook** and **chill**, and describes the situations in which to use them.

Clean: Wash hands and surfaces often.

Message for recipe	When and how do I use this message?	Where do I put this message?
Wash hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.	• include each time raw meat, poultry, fish, seafood or eggs are handled	• include this as the first step of every recipe • include this as something people do before they start preparing food • put this in a tip box at the start of the recipe • put this in a call out to draw attention to it
Wash all surfaces, like _____, _____ , and _____ used for food preparation. For example: Wash countertops, cutting boards and knives.	• fill in the blanks with the name of the equipment or utensil, for example, countertops, cutting boards, knives, etc.	• include this as something people do after washing their hands and before they start preparing food • include this when changing tasks and at the end to clean up the kitchen • put this in a tip box at the start of the recipe

Clean: Rinse vegetables and fruit, but don't use soap.

Message for recipe	When and how do I use this message?	Where do I put this message?
Gently rinse _____ under cool running water. For example: Gently rinse pears under cool running water.	• fill in the blank with the name of the delicate vegetable or fruit • this applies to delicate produce like apples, pears, oranges, cucumbers, mushrooms, etc.	• put in the recipe when delicate produce is used • put it in a tip box at the start of the recipe
Scrub _____ with a clean vegetable brush under cool running water. For example: Scrub sweet potatoes with a clean vegetable brush under cool running water.	• fill in the blank with the name of the firm vegetable or fruit • this applies to firm produce like cantaloupes, potatoes, etc.	• put in the recipe when firm produce is used • put it in a tip box at the start of the recipe

Separate: Don't cross contaminate from raw to cooked food

Message for recipe	When and how do I use this message?	Where do I put this message?
Don't rinse raw poultry or meat.	• include this sentence the first time raw poultry or meat is mentioned in the recipe • you may choose to include it again if other raw poultry or meat are used	• put it in a call out box to draw attention to it
Wash _____ after using it with raw _____ before reusing it. For example: Wash cutting board after using it with raw chicken before reusing it.	• fill in blank 1 with the name of the item such as: countertop, cutting board, serving platter, knife, tongs, etc. • fill in blank 2 with the name of the raw food item such as: meat, poultry, fish, seafood or eggs.	• put this in the recipe when switching from preparing or handling raw food to handling cooked or ready-to-eat food • put it in a tip box at the start of the recipe

Separate: Don't cross contaminate from raw to cooked food

Message for recipe	When and how do I use this message?	Where do I put this message?
Don't reuse marinades that were used on raw foods.	• include this if the recipe uses a marinade	• put this in the recipe where marinade is made • put in a call out box near the marinade directions to call attention to it • put this in a tip box at the start of the recipe
Use separate equipment and utensils such as _____ and _____ for handling raw food and cooked food. For example: Use separate equipment and utensils such as serving platters and tongs for handling raw food and cooked food.	• fill in the blank with the name of the item such as: cutting board, serving platter, knife, tongs, etc.	• put this in the recipe when switching from preparing or handling raw food to handling cooked or ready-to-eat food • put this in a tip box at the start of the recipe

Cook: Cook food to proper temperatures and check to be sure

Message for recipe	When and how do I use this message?	Where do I put this message?
Cook until internal temperature reaches ___ °C (___ °F) on a digital food thermometer.	• fill in the blanks referring to the **Cooking temperatures chart** • this is a great message for everyone, especially those who are just learning to cook	• put in the recipe close to where the cook time is mentioned • put in the recipe when referring to the 'doneness' of food since the temperature is more accurate than colour (for example, brown) or texture (for example, firm)
Keep hot food hot at or above 60°C (140°F) before serving.	• include this message when preparing food in advance to make sure the prepared food is kept at a safe temperature	• put in the recipe when food is being prepared then set aside to be served or eaten later • put in the recipe when preparing food for a party, a large group, or a buffet
Reheat leftovers to an internal temperature of 74°C (165°F).	• include this sentence in most recipes, especially if the recipes make a lot of servings • include in batch cooking recipes	• include it at the end of the recipe • put it in a tip box as a useful reminder

Chill: Keep cold food cold by refrigerating or freezing promptly

Message for recipe	When and how do I use this message?	Where do I put this message?
Keep cold food cold at or below 4°C (40°F).	• include it each time cold food needs to be put aside for later use	• include it during food preparation as needed, for example when marinating meat • put it near the end of the recipe • this message works well with the 'Put leftovers away' message
Put leftovers away in the fridge within 2 hours, or sooner if they are in warm location.	• include it when the recipe will make a lot of food and there may be leftovers • include it when preparing food for special occasions as there may be a lot of food as this will avoid food waste	• put it near the end of the recipe • this message works well with the 'Keep cold food cold' message • include it in a tip box or a call out box to draw attention to it

Chill: Keep cold food cold by refrigerating or freezing promptly

Message for recipe	When and how do I use this message?	Where do I put this message?
Follow safe food storage guidance in **Storing leftovers** to help save money and decrease food waste.	• include it as a reference about leftover storage • include it as a money-saving tip • include it as a reminder to decrease food waste	• put it near the end of the recipe • include it in a tip box or a call out box to draw attention to it

How to use the safe recipe style guide

Here are some ideas for using the style guide:

1 Choose the specific food safety tips that work for you and your recipe.

2 Ideally, start every recipe with the instruction to wash hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.

- However, you can be as creative as you like. Perhaps you could place this food safety tip in a call out box to draw attention to it.
- Another idea is to scan through your recipe and determine which overall food safety tips you will use and create a 'tips box'.

3 Check out the **Style guide food safety tips** to learn which ones you can add to recipes.

- Use the style guide food safety tips wording as closely as possible for consistency.
- However, you can make changes as needed to work for your recipe(s).

4 Add food safety tips to your new recipes and adapt your existing recipes.

- You may need to use food safety tips from all key areas for some recipes, while you may only need tips from 2 or 3 key areas in others.
- You can choose the tips that work for your recipes.

Food safety editorial content: Extra tips to share with your readers

Cleaning tips

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. Do you know how long that is? Twenty (20) seconds is how long it takes to sing Happy Birthday to yourself twice! Whether you sing out loud or not, well, that's up to you.

- Hand sanitizer doesn't replace handwashing. It's only second best. Always use soap and water when it's available.

- It's important to rinse fresh vegetables and fruit under cool running water just before eating, even if you plan to peel them. This is because bacteria can spread from the outside to the inside during cutting.

Separating tips

- Never rinse poultry before cooking it because you can spread bacteria wherever the water splashes, like the sink, the countertop and your clothes.

- If you want to use some of the marinade to baste cooked meat or use as a dipping sauce, make sure to set some aside at the beginning of the recipe. It's very important that it hasn't touched raw meat. Never use leftover marinade that has touched raw meat on cooked food.

- Using different coloured cutting boards is a good way to keep raw meat and raw vegetables separate. For example, use a red cutting board for raw meat and a green cutting board for chopping rinsed veggies.

Cooking tips

- You can't tell if food is cooked just by looking at it. You need to use a digital food thermometer to make sure.

- Be sure to check all pieces of meat with your digital food thermometer in case they are different sizes and cook at different rates. Also, your oven, barbecue or frypan may not distribute the heat evenly.

- You need to cook beef hamburgers to 71°C (160°F). Each type and cut of meat needs to be cooked to its own specific internal temperature. Use a digital food thermometer to check that it's cooked to a safe temperature.

Chilling tips

- The safest way to thaw food, especially raw meat, poultry, fish or seafood, is in the refrigerator. Never defrost food at room temperature because harmful bacteria grow quickly at these temperatures and could make you sick.

- Refrigerate all leftovers promptly in small portions, using multiple shallow containers so they cool quickly. Promptly means within 2 hours, or sooner if the weather is warm. Bacteria grow quickly at warmer temperatures.

- Think chill when grocery shopping too. Buy your refrigerated and frozen food at the end of your grocery trip. Bring them home in an insulated bag, then refrigerate or freeze them as soon as possible.

For more information:

- **Food safety**
- **Common food allergens**
- **Food safety education: Safe recipe style guide**