

Spring cleaning? Be sure to give your kitchen a food safe makeover, too

Adopt food safety practices to avoid foodborne illness

CHICAGO, IL, UNITED STATES, April 1, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Spring time is cleaning time! So, while you're using that pent-up elbow grease to get rid of wintertime dust and debris, make sure your kitchen is food safe, too. From sponges to drawer handles to the refrigerator, the kitchen is the one room in the house most likely to be bacteria-tainted. Food is more easily cross-contaminated when everything in its path is covered in bacteria.

So, as you're clearing out the clutter from the neglected places like cabinets and shelves, do not forget the everyday places around the kitchen, like counters and sinks, which can be bacteria breeding grounds hiding in plain sight.

"There are so many food safety-related things that people don't often consider, such as handling raw chicken and then grabbing the spice bottle—with unwashed hands—to season it, and then putting the seasoning back in the cabinet. Spring is a good time to review your food safety practices and incorporate some new healthy habits into your daily routine," says Deirdre Schlunegger, CEO of Stop Foodborne Illness, a national, nonprofit, public health organization dedicated to preventing illness and death from foodborne pathogens.



Young couple spring cleaning



Stainless Steel Sink

Sponges and dishrags: If they're used for cleaning why aren't they clean? You would think that sponges and dishrags would be some of the cleanest items in your house, because they are used with cleaning and disinfecting agents. But think again. Public health and safety firm NSF International found that 72 percent of sponges and dishrags were contaminated with bacteria which can cause food poisoning, making them the germiest thing in your house.

Prevent the growth of bacteria like salmonella by allowing sponges and rags to dry between uses or zap them in the microwave for a minute or two. A recent Fitness Magazine article recommended replacing your sponges once every three weeks.

Everything including the kitchen sink
Kitchen sinks are like prime real estate developments for nasty bacteria like E. coli. Here's why: Many people dump raw meat juices or drain packets containing raw meat straight into the sink, thinking it helps contain the spread of bacteria. However, within 20 minutes of E.coli coming into contact with a sink, it can multiply like wildfire. Combat those germs by scrubbing down counters, utensils and sinks as part of your regular cleaning routine.

Be a refrigerator germ-terminator!
The refrigerator is one of the most neglected spots when cleaning. When The Today Show's national investigative correspondent, Jeff Rossen, went germ-hunting in his home he found that his fridge's shelves had a reading of 904 on the bacteria meter, slightly over nine times higher than what experts consider acceptable.

According to an article by CNET Contributor Alina Bradford, it's a good idea to perform a deep cleaning of your refrigerator on a seasonal basis. Here are her tips on how to do it:

1. Remove everything from the fridge and put perishables in a cooler with some ice.
2. Look at your condiments and toss them if they're past the "use by" date.
3. Remove the meat and vegetable drawers. Soak them in a bathtub or sink full of warm sudsy water.
4. While the drawers are soaking, wipe down the inside of the fridge, the door panels, the top of the fridge and the seals. Make a good cleaning solution with 2 tablespoons of baking soda and 1 quart (about 1 liter) of hot water.
5. Rinse everything you wiped down with a wet, clean cloth.
6. Rinse the vegetable and meat drawers with warm water, dry them and put them back into the fridge.

According to experts, foods like spilled milk and raw meat juices encourage microbial growth of all kinds, especially Listeria, which can thrive in a cold temperature. Bacteria and mold can lead to foodborne illness. To reduce risk, wipe up any spills immediately and wrap raw meat in a disposable bag and place it on a plate before storing it in the



Open Refrigerator



Grocery Shopping

Oven mitts may keep out the heat, but not the bacteria

Oven mitts protect hands from hot pans, but not from bacteria. Slower growing microorganisms thrive on mitts because they are not frequently washed even though they occasionally brush up against food, have been left on dirty counters and get hung up or shoved in a dark drawer. So, like your towels and dishrags, wash your mitts regularly to keep them clean and bacteria-safe.

Reusable grocery bags: Great for the environment, but not for inhibiting germs

Reusable grocery bags are great for the environment, but they are also great for spreading bacteria like E. coli. A 2010 study found that more than half of eco-friendly reusable totes are contaminated with bacteria because almost 97 percent of shoppers interviewed said they never wash their bags. Keep food safe by throwing your bags in the wash.



Raw Meat

Hooray, it's grilling season! But remember that preparing raw meat requires extra safety precaution

The key to safe handling of raw meat is to avoid cross contamination when you prepare your raw meat for the grill. Touch raw meat as little as possible, and don't let raw meat touch cabinets, drawers, or other items on the counter when preparing it. Do not cut vegetables on the same board, or with the same knife, used on raw meat. Better yet, designate specific boards and knives for only raw meat. And, always wash your hands.

Stop Foodborne Illness wishes you a fantastic spring! We're confident you'll enjoy the warm weather even more knowing you're helping your family avoid foodborne illness.

About Stop Foodborne Illness

Stop Foodborne Illness is a national nonprofit, public health organization dedicated to preventing illness and death from foodborne pathogens by promoting sound food safety policy and best practices, building public awareness, and assisting those impacted by foodborne illness. For more food safety tips please visit www.Stopfoodborneillness.org/awareness/. If you think you have been sickened from food, contact your local health professional. You may subscribe to receive Stop Foodborne Illness e-Alerts and eNews here: www.Stopfoodborneillness.org/take-action/sign-up-for-e-alerts/.

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