

Wellness Wednesday



May 17, 2023

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8 Common Kitchen Habits That A Food Safety Inspector Might Fail You For *The best way to avoid foodborne illness? Run your home kitchen like a pro would.*

Imagine if you visited a restaurant and saw the chef cooking barefoot or liberally taking advantage of the 10-second rule — you'd walk out, right?

Yes, restaurants should be held to a higher standard than you are at home. After all, way more people are filtering in and out, making potential exposure to food-related sickness way higher.

But it's almost a cruel joke when you get food poisoning from your own cooking. And food safety aside, some restaurant rules can make kitchens cleaner and more efficient, which is pretty darn appealing. Simply put, there are some ways you can benefit from being a bit more buttoned up in your own kitchen, and food safety experts told us that it starts with ditching these eight common habits.



1. Fitting Food In The Fridge Wherever There's Room

Many people stick food in the refrigerator wherever there's space, without giving it much thought. But Ellen Shumaker, who has a Ph.D. in food science and directs outreach for North Carolina State University's community food safety program, said that restaurants must follow strict rules about where to place items in the fridge to avoid cross-contamination. For example, she said raw foods could contain pathogens that make people sick, so it's important that they not come into contact with ready-to-eat foods.

Want to stock your fridge so it could earn a food safety inspector's stamp of approval? Shumaker said to store raw foods below ready-to-eat options in case the packages leak.

"For example, keep raw chicken and meat on the bottom shelf of your fridge, while keeping vegetables and other foods you consume fresh on the top shelf," she said. Shumaker added that it's important to use appropriate lids and containers, and to clean your fridge regularly to prevent dirt or moisture buildup, which could also lead to contaminated food.

2. Putting Newer Items At The Front Of The Pantry Or Fridge And Older Ones At The Back

If you were to peek inside your pantry right now, what would be at the very front? Your favorite bag of chips? The oatmeal you grab every morning when making breakfast? Though it might make the most organizational sense to put your go-to items right up front, Martin Bucknavage, a senior food safety extension associate at Pennsylvania State University's Department of Food Science, said restaurants use a method called "first in, first out."

"We want to use the oldest product first, based upon the stated shelf life," he said. This, he explained, makes sure everything gets used and prevents expired food from hanging out in the pantry, completely forgotten about in the back.

3. Dipping Your Spatula Into Food You're Preparing For A Little Taste

When you're cooking at home, part of the fun is tasting as you go — and it can be the key to making sure you have the right balance of spices. Both Bucknavage and Shumaker said that taste testing is allowed in restaurant kitchens, but there are strict rules for how to go about doing it.

"Because people can carry pathogens such as *Staphylococcus aureus*, this is an easy way to introduce bacteria into a food," Shumaker said. "Tasting can be done, but needs to be done in a way that the taster is not contaminating the dish."

For example, food should not be tasted over preparation or serving containers, and tasting utensils should be single-use. The safe way to test food, according to Shumaker, is to use a disposable utensil or a plate to take a sample from a dish and then to step away from other food as you taste it.

4. Thawing Meat Or Fish On The Counter

Cooking meat or fish for dinner requires some forward thinking. You've probably never given a second thought to pulling something out of the freezer and leaving it on the counter to thaw while you go to work or run errands. But Bucknavage said that would never happen at a restaurant.

"This can lead to temperature abuse of the food. And with raw meats and fish, this can lead to spoilage of the product and growth of bacterial pathogens if present," he said.

Instead, he said that restaurant workers would do a controlled thaw, with adequate temperatures maintained throughout the process and monitored with a thermometer.

"A general rule is that foods should not be above 41 degrees Fahrenheit, or below 135 [for maintaining hot foods], for longer than four hours," Shumaker said.

5. Not Properly Regulating Temperatures

Speaking of temperatures, both food safety experts said not enough people use one key tool at home: a food thermometer. Follow the Department of Agriculture's guide to internal temperatures for every kind of meat to help cut down on foodborne illnesses.

Shumaker and Bucknavage said that making sure your refrigerator is the right temperature is important, too. The USDA says refrigerators should be set at 40 degrees or below.

6. Stacking Wet Cutting Boards After Washing Them

If you keep your cutting boards on top of each other in a cabinet, you're committing a food safety sin. Bucknavage said that, in restaurant kitchens, cutting boards are stored upright and never stacked.

"This is to ensure proper drainage. If stored on top of each other, moisture will be captured, which can result in mold growth," he said.

7. Drying Utensils With A Dish Towel

Anyone who's ever worked in a restaurant kitchen knows that when a food safety inspector shows up, you must immediately hide all the dish towels, and especially make sure to remove them from counter-tops. That's because they can be a breeding ground for bacteria.

"Drying with a dish towel could potentially recontaminate utensils in the event that the towel is contaminated," Shumaker said. She said such implements should be air-dried instead.

8. Letting Your Pet Hang Out With You While You Cook

This one might be obvious, but animals aren't allowed in restaurant kitchens because they could contaminate areas with their hair, drool and other secretions. Both cats and dogs carry germs that can cause foodborne illness. If you are going to allow your pet in the kitchen, at least wash your hands between giving them some love and prepping your meal.

By putting this and the seven other habits to bed, you're making your kitchen a pretty clean place to cook and eat — even if you do follow the 10-second rule every now and then.



THE BEST CHICKEN ENCHILADA RECIPE

168 Calories | Prep: 10 mins | Cook: 35 mins | Total: 45 mins
 YIELD: 8 servings | Course: Dinner Cuisine: American



INGREDIENTS

For the enchilada sauce:

2 garlic cloves, minced
 1-2 tablespoons chipotle chilis in adobo sauce, depending how spicy you like it
 1-1/2 cups tomato sauce
 1/2 teaspoon chipotle chili powder
 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
 3/4 cup reduced sodium chicken broth
 kosher salt and fresh pepper to taste

For the chicken:

1 teaspoon extra virgin olive oil
 10 ounces cooked shredded chicken breast, from 2 breasts of a rotisserie chicken or shredded chicken in the slow cooker*
 1 cup diced onion
 2 large cloves garlic, minced
 1/4 cup cilantro
 kosher salt
 1 teaspoon cumin
 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
 1 teaspoon chipotle chili powder
 1/3 cup chicken broth
 1/2 cup tomato sauce

For the enchilada:

8 7-inch whole wheat flour tortillas, (I use low-carb la tortilla factory)
 1 cup part-skim shredded Mexican cheese blend, or cheddar
 olive oil spray
 2 tbs chopped scallions, or cilantro, for topping
 optional toppings: sour cream, avocado, Greek yogurt, jalapeños, etc

The BEST Chicken enchilada recipe! These easy chicken enchiladas are made with shredded chicken, cheese and my home-made enchilada sauce.

What is an Enchilada?

An enchilada is a traditional Mexican dish that typically consists of a tortilla filled with anything from meat, cheese, beans, vegetables, and spices, rolled up and covered with enchilada sauce. Enchiladas are served hot and can be topped with additional cheese, sour cream, avocado and other toppings.

Nutrition Information

Serving: 1 large enchilada, Calories: 168 kcal, Carbohydrates: 17 g, Protein: 17 g, Fat: 6.5 g, Saturated Fat: 2 g, Cholesterol: 29.5 mg, Sodium: 441 mg, Fiber: 8.5 g, Sugar: 3 g



INSTRUCTIONS



1. Preheat oven to 400F degrees.
2. Spray a medium pot with oil and add garlic, sauté 30 seconds. Add chipotle chiles, chili powder, cumin, chicken broth, tomato sauce, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer for 5-10 minutes, to let the flavors meld. Set aside until ready to use.
3. Heat the oil in a medium skillet over medium-high heat. Sauté onions and garlic on low until soft, about 2 minutes. Add chicken, salt, cilantro, cumin, oregano, chili powder, tomato sauce, chicken broth, and cook 4 to 5 minutes. Remove from heat.
4. Spray a 13 x 9-inch glass or ceramic baking dish with oil. Put 1/3 cup chicken mixture into each tortilla and roll it.
5. Place on baking dish seam side down, top with sauce. Then top with cheese.
6. Cover with foil and bake in the oven on the middle rack for 20-25 minutes, until it's heated through and the cheese is melted. Garnish with scallions or cilantro. Optional: top with your favorite toppings if desired. (Extra points)
7. Makes 8 enchiladas.

FEATURED EXERCISE

https://www.self.com/gallery/best-hip-strengthening-exercises?ssp_iabi=1682601574859Featured Exercise ► **Double Banded Pull Through** » **Do it:**

- Attach a long resistance band low to the ground behind you. Or, you can also use a cable.
- Stand in front of the band with your feet about shoulder-width apart with a looped mini resistance band just above your knees. Push your legs apart slightly to actively maintain tension in the band and prevent your knees from caving in.
- Hinge forward at the hips and push your butt back as you bend your knees to reach down and grab the long band between your legs. You should feel stretch in your hamstrings and glutes.
- Keep your chest lifted and back flat as you stand back up, driving your hips forward and squeezing your glutes at the top. That's 1 rep.
- Do 12-15 reps.

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Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.



**A person
who feels
appreciated
will always
do more
than what is
expected.**



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