



Breaking News

USDA lowers cooking temperature for pork

By Rita Jane Gabbett on 5/24/2011

USDA announced it is updating its recommendation for safely cooking pork, steaks, roasts, and chops.

USDA recommends cooking all whole cuts of meat to 145 °F as measured with a food thermometer placed in the thickest part of the meat, then allowing the meat to rest for three minutes before carving or consuming.

This change does not apply to ground meats, including ground beef, veal, lamb, and pork, which should be cooked to 160 °F and do not require a rest time. The safe cooking temperature for all poultry products, including ground chicken and turkey, remains at 165 °F.

"With a single temperature for all whole cuts of meat and uniform three-minute stand time, we believe it will be much easier for consumers to remember and result in safer food preparation," said Under Secretary Elisabeth Hagen. "Now there will only be three numbers to remember: 145 for whole meats, 160 for ground meats and 165 for all poultry."

USDA is lowering the recommended safe cooking temperature for whole cuts of pork from 160 °F to 145 °F and adding a three-minute rest time. The safe temperature for cuts of beef, veal, and lamb remains unchanged at 145 °F, but the department is adding a three-minute rest time as part of its cooking recommendations. Cooking raw pork, steaks, roasts, and chops to 145 °F with the addition of a three-minute rest time will result in a product that is both microbiologically safe and at its best quality.

Why the Rest Time is Important

A "rest time" is the amount of time the product remains at the final temperature, after it has been removed from a grill, oven, or other heat source. During the three minutes after meat is removed from the heat source, its temperature remains constant or continues to rise, which destroys pathogens.

USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) has determined that it is just as safe to cook cuts of pork to 145 °F with a three-minute rest time as it is to cook them to 160 °F, the previously recommended temperature, with no rest time.

The new cooking suggestions reflect the same standards that the agency uses for cooked meat products produced in federally inspected meat establishments, which rely on the rest time of three minutes to achieve safe pathogen reduction.

Appearance of Cooked Pork

The new cooking recommendations clarify long-held perceptions about cooking pork. Historically, consumers have viewed the color pink in pork to be a sign of undercooked meat. If raw pork is cooked to 145 °F and allowed to rest for three minutes, it may still be pink but is safe to eat. The

pink color can be due to the cooking method, added ingredients, or other factors. As always, cured pork (e.g., cured ham and cured pork chops) will remain pink after cooking.

Appearance in meat is not a reliable indicator of safety or risk. Only by using a food thermometer can consumers determine if meat has reached a sufficient temperature to destroy pathogens of public health concern. Any cooked, uncured red meats – including pork – can be pink, even when the meat has reached a safe internal temperature.

For more information about raw pork, including storage information, see USDA's [fact sheet](#).

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