

Risky chicken

Harmful bacteria can be found in most raw birds. Here's what to do.

Think the chicken you usually buy can't make you sick? Read on. We tested for two common causes of food poisoning—salmonella and campylobacter—in birds from more than 100 supermarkets, warehouse clubs, and gourmet and natural-food stores across the country. And of the 382 whole broilers in our sampling—including some from Perdue, Foster Farms, and Tyson; organic and nonorganic store brands; and some organic brand names—66 percent were infected with one or both bacterial bugs. Fourteen percent tested positive for salmonella, and 62 percent tested positive for campylobacter. The good news is that those numbers are down from what we reported in 2007, when 83 percent of the birds we tested were infected with one or both pathogens. In the current study Perdue and “air-chilled” organic brands were among the cleanest. But no matter what bird you buy, take these precautions:

At the store ...

Buy it last. Get chicken at your last stop at the store so it will stay cool longer.

Dig it down. Choose chicken from the bottom of the display case, where the temperature should be cooler.

Avoid moist or leaky packages. They are a sign that the wrapping could have holes where bacteria can enter.

Bag it. Swing by the produce aisle, grab a plastic bag, and put the chicken in it to keep juices off other groceries.

At home ...

Chill it. As soon as you get home, store chicken on a low shelf in the fridge at



BAD BIRDS Chicken can easily make you sick if you don't prep and cook it right.

the proper temperature, 40° F or below, on a plate to cut the risk of juices leaking and contaminating other foods.

Eat it within a couple of days. If you can't, freeze it. Make sure your freezer is set at 0° F or below.

Treat it right. Thaw chicken in the fridge or, if you're in a rush, the microwave, and cook it right away. Never thaw chicken on a countertop because the outside will warm to a temperature at which microorganisms thrive long before the center is thawed.

When you prep ...

Use a separate cutting board. You need two: one for raw meat and poultry, another for fruits and veggies.

Clean as you go. Keep raw chicken separate from other foods, especially those that will not be cooked. To avoid

cross contamination, clean up as soon as possible after you're done prepping, using hot soapy water and paper towels to wash hands, counters, utensils, sink, faucets, and anything else you might have touched.

Get out the meat thermometer. To kill any disease-causing bacteria, cook chicken to an internal temperature of at least 165° F.

Chuck the marinade. Never use a sauce that raw chicken has been sitting in unless the sauce has been thoroughly cooked; bring it to a rolling boil for at least a minute.

Play it safe with leftovers. Put them in the fridge within 2 hours of cooking. Divide the chicken into small portions so it will cool quickly and microorganisms will have less time to multiply. And eat leftovers within a couple of days.