



# Geary County

K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION NEWS

[geary.k-state.edu](http://geary.k-state.edu)

September 2022

## Ask the Agent

**Q:** Is it safe to freeze whole tomatoes with the skin left on them?

**A:** Tomatoes may be frozen raw or cooked, whole, sliced, chopped, or puréed. Tomatoes do not need to be blanched or peeled before freezing. Frozen tomatoes are best used in cooked foods such as soups, sauces and stews as they become mushy when they're thawed. To use the frozen tomatoes, remove them from the freezer a few at a time or all at once and then use them in any cooked-tomato recipe.

For more information call the Geary County K-State Research & Extension office at: **785-238-4161**

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## Don't Fall In to Food Safety Traps

September 2022

If you cook meals at home, you likely have learned your skills and recipes from your parents or other caregivers you had as they grew up. Then, as an adult, you may have been influenced by friends or co-workers. It's possible that now you turn to social media or online recipes to add to your culinary creations. Sometimes you get lucky and have great results, but too many times, you are following food preparation directions that could put you in jeopardy of experiencing a food borne illness that could have very serious effects.



September is National Food Safety Education month. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an estimated 1 in 6 Americans get foodborne illness (food poisoning) every year. These cases are caused by poor food handling practices, improper cooking techniques, inaccurate internal cooking temperatures, and any other various human errors.

The tendency to use the internet for guidance in food preparation tips and skills, has fueled the flame of increased food illness cases as often safe food handling practices are overlooked. Here are some of the myths that you may read about and the facts that bust these myths apart.

**Myth #1**—You should wash your meat, chicken, or turkey before you cook it.

**FACT:** Do not wash meat, chicken, or turkey before you cook it. Doing so will spread germs to your sink, countertops, and other surfaces in your kitchen. Those germs can get on other foods, like salads or fruit, and make you sick. Don't wash meat, [chicken](#), turkey, or eggs. Cooking them thoroughly will kill harmful germs.

**Myth #2**—It is harmless to eat raw batter or dough, including cookie dough, and other foods with uncooked eggs or uncooked flour.

**FACT:** Uncooked flour and eggs may contain E. coli, Salmonella, or other harmful bacteria. Even pre-made cookie dough may contain these bacteria and cause you to become ill. Cook or bake flour and eggs thoroughly. Don't eat foods that contain raw or undercooked eggs, such as runny eggs, homemade mayonnaise, hollandaise sauce, and eggnog. Don't eat raw (uncooked) dough or batter that contains flour or eggs. Keep raw dough away from children, including play dough. Wash hands, work surfaces, and utensils thoroughly after contact with flour, raw eggs, and raw dough.

**Myth #3**—It is safe to thaw or marinate meat in a container on the kitchen counter.

**FACT:** Thaw food safely. You can thaw it: a) In the refrigerator, b) In cold water, or c) In the microwave. Always marinate food in the refrigerator no matter what kind of marinade you're using.

**Myth #4**—Raw protein foods such as meat, chicken, turkey, seafood, or eggs are appropriate for some diets.

**FACT:** Undercooked foods may have germs that can make you sick. Use a food thermometer to make sure you cook food to a safe internal temperature. Get a detailed list of foods and safe temperatures (at the [Geary County K-State Research & Extension website](#).) Also, if you won't be serving hot food right away, keep it hot (at 140°F or above) until serving.

**Myth #5**—It is unnecessary to wash fresh fruits and vegetables if you peel them before you eat them.

**FACT:** Fruits and vegetables may have germs on their peeling or skin. It's easy to transfer those germs to the inside of fruits and vegetables when you cut or peel them. Wash all fruits and vegetables under running water even if you're going to peel them. Use a clean vegetable brush to scrub firm fruits and vegetables like melons, avocados, and cucumbers. Washing fruits and vegetables with soap, detergent, or commercial produce wash is not recommended. Do not use bleach solutions or other disinfecting products on fruits and vegetables. (continued on next page...)

## Food Safety Traps *(cont. from page 1)*

Myth #6— Rinsing your hands with warm water will reduce your risk of passing germs to another person.

**FACT:** Wash hands the right way after touching potentially contaminated surfaces—for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm running water. Also—wash hands before, during, and after preparing food; before eating; and after using the toilet or changing a child's diaper.

Myth #7—Only people who have a compromised immune system need to be concerned about food poisoning.

**FACT:** Anyone can get food poisoning. But some people are more likely to get sick and to have a more serious illness. This includes:

- Adults aged 65 and older
- Children younger than 5 years
- People who have health problems or who take medicines that lower the body's ability to fight germs and sickness (weakened immune systems)
- Pregnant women

Myth #8— Food that contains bacteria or toxins that can make you sick will have a distinctive odor to it.

**FACT:** You can't taste, smell, or see the germs that cause food poisoning. Additionally, you usually won't taste the contaminants in unsafe foods. Consuming only a tiny amount can make you very sick.

Myth #9— You should allow foods to reach room temperature before you put them away so they won't increase the inside temperature of the refrigerator.

**FACT:** Harmful germs can grow in perishable foods (including meat, chicken, turkey, seafood, eggs, cut fruit, cooked rice, and leftovers) if you leave them out of the refrigerator 2 hours or longer.

Myth #10— It is safe to put cooked meat back on the plate that held the raw meat.

**FACT:** Always use [separate plates](#) for raw meat and cooked meat. The same rule applies to chicken, turkey, and seafood. If you use the same plate, thoroughly wash the plate with hot soapy water and dry with a paper towel before putting cooked meat on it.

## FIVE SIGNS of SEVERE FOOD POISONING

Do you have these symptoms?  
IF SO, SEE A DOCTOR!



Bloody diarrhea



Fever higher than 102°F



Frequent vomiting



Dehydration



Diarrhea for more than 3 days



[www.cdc.gov/foodsafety](http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety)

## Family Health

Foodborne illness (sometimes called food poisoning, foodborne disease, or foodborne infection) is common, costly—and preventable. You can get food poisoning after swallowing food that has been contaminated with a [variety of germs](#) or toxic substances.

Food poisoning symptoms can be anywhere from mild to very serious. Your symptoms may be different depending on the germ you swallowed. The most common symptoms of food poisoning are:

- Upset stomach
- Stomach cramps
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Fever



CLEAN



SEPARATE



COOK



CHILL

**Following four simple steps at home—Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill—can help protect you and your loved ones from food poisoning.**

## Surviving the High Cost of Living

According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2022), food prices, on average, increased by 10.8 percent from April 2021 to April 2022. This spike marked the largest one-year percentage increase in more than 40 years. Likewise, the price of food, such as eggs, meat, poultry, and fish has increased by 14.3 percent within the same period. Not only have food prices steadily risen, but the price of gas, housing, transportation, and healthcare have risen as well. People are looking for ways to survive the high cost of living.

### Impact of Inflation

Overall, daily living costs rose 8.5 percent in the past year. Due to inflation, households now spend an additional \$341 to purchase the same goods and services they did one year ago. This means that families have less disposable income (available money after tax deductions). Unlike high-income families, low-income families are more likely to use their income for necessities like food, gas, and housing. So, the slightest change in disposable income for these families makes it extremely difficult to manage household expenses.

The wages of average workers are not keeping pace with the steady rise in prices. The result is inflation, causing a decrease in buying power. For example, meat that cost \$50 a year ago, now costs \$57.15 or more. Inflation not only impacts buying power, but it affects budgets as well.

### Cost-Saving Tips

While soaring inflation is causing many people to rethink their spending decisions, an important decision you can make is to create and use a spending plan. A spending plan is simply a budget outlining how you will spend your money. A spending plan also helps to control spending. Other cost-cutting tips to control spending on food, gas, and housing are listed below.

### Food

- Use coupons and coupon apps.
- Take advantage of special offers (e.g., two items for the price of one).
- Buy generic or store brand.

- Plan menus ahead of time.
- Buy cheaper cuts of meat.
- Buy in bulk but make sure the unit price is lower than when sold individually.
- Avoid buying food items that require less labor (e.g., chopped onions, bagged salad, cubed fruit, or shredded cheese) because they cost more money.
- Limit eating out.
- Establish container gardens to grow fresh produce and reduce food costs.

### Gas

- Use public transportation where available.
- Carpool to share a ride.
- Use apps to avoid traffic jams or rush hour traffic.
- Use gas apps to locate the least expensive gas in your local area.
- Keep your vehicle well maintained (tires properly inflated, regular oil change, etc.)

### Housing

- Move in with parents or friends, or get a housemate.
- Learn to do your own home repairs if a licensed person is not required.
- Identify ways to save energy and cut water usage to save on utility bills.

### More Information

In closing, some individuals whose wages increase with inflation can possibly absorb the rising cost of necessities more easily. Unfortunately, many individuals and families (e.g., older adults and those living paycheck to paycheck) feel the pinch of increasing prices as inflation outpaces their paychecks. Nonetheless, use these money-saving tips to survive the high cost of living.

*Source: Alabama A&M & Auburn Universities Extension  
<https://www.aces.edu>*

## Dress for Success!

The job market is as fluid as ever! Businesses of all types continue to scramble to hire people, especially those who work on the frontlines with customers such as healthcare, hospitality, and retail. Some are calling this time "The Great Resignation" which refers to the more than 19 million workers that have quit their jobs since April 2021. As people begin to land back in the job market, it is wise for them to consider what they have in their closet that aligns with the type of position they are applying for.

Here are tips for wardrobe updating and revamping to help you make a positive first impression during the interview or on the job:

- Get organized. Clean out and re-organize your closet and dresser.
- Decide on a basic color plan. Neutrals are always in style

and are a good foundation for your wardrobe.

- Evaluate your wardrobe. Take an inventory of your closet and make a list of things you need. Buying from a list will keep you focused and curb impulse buying.
- Plan your wardrobe for variety and flexibility. Choose a few fun pieces to keep your wardrobe looking fresh and up-to-date.
- Determine your clothing budget. Decide what you can afford to spend on clothes every month, and stick to that budget.
- Buy the best quality clothes that you can afford. They will last longer, wear better and ultimately save you money.
- Buy basic styles because they will last longer.
- Take care of the clothes you have. Learn how to care for your clothes the right way.

*Source: Dressing Professionally on a Budget by Denise Dias  
K-State Research & Extension publication MF2881*



**Geary County**

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**Upcoming Geary County Extension Programs**

**\*\*Requires pre-registration. Call 238-4161 to pre-register\*\***

**September**

Mondays—Healthy Together Communal Meals continue to be offered at the PLC (aka Larry Dixon Center), 920 W. 6th Street, Junction City every Monday from 5-6PM for low-resourced seniors. Free to the public, these meals can be taken "to go" or served for dining in. Join us each Monday for a well-balanced health conscious meal! Please note, meals are not served on national holidays.

26 Our office will begin making Medicare open enrollment appointments. Call 238-4161 and ask for Traci!

**October**

15 Medicare Open Enrollment begins



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