

Is it done yet?

By Deb Botzek-Linn, University of Minnesota Extension

ST. CLOUD, MN (5/18/2015) — Food thermometers aren't just for holiday turkeys and roasts anymore—they're for all cuts of meat and poultry, including hamburgers, chicken breasts, and pork chops. As Memorial weekend ushers in grilling season, know that meat and poultry need to be cooked to a safe temperature to destroy harmful bacteria that may be present.

The color of meat and poultry as it grills is not a good indicator of safety. Many people assume that if a hamburger is brown in the middle, it is done. However, looking at the color and texture of food is not enough—you have to use a food thermometer to be sure! According to USDA research, 1 out of every 4 hamburgers turns brown before it reaches a safe internal temperature. When a hamburger is cooked to 160°F as measured with a food thermometer, it is both safe and delicious!

USDA recommends cooking all poultry to a safe minimum internal temperature of 165°F, ground beef to 160°F, and beef steaks or pork chops to 145°F as measured with a food thermometer. For personal taste, you may choose to cook meat to higher temperatures.

Use an instant-read food thermometer to check the internal temperature toward the end of the cooking, but before the meat is expected to be “done”. Place the thermometer in the thickest part of the food and not touching bone, fat, or gristle.

Food thermometers are economical and readily available in the kitchen department of retail and grocery stores. They typically cost \$5 to \$10 each. There are a variety of types of food thermometers, so it is important to follow the instructions for your food thermometer. Make sure to clean your food thermometer with hot, soapy water before and after each use.

Enjoy summertime grilling diligently cooking all meats to a safe internal temperature. Use a food thermometer to be sure!

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