

FSIS Public Health Messages Regarding Food Safety Moderator Guide (Final)

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I. Introduction—Welcome Group (5 minutes)

- Who we are and who we represent
 - Introduce moderators
 - Study being sponsored by USDA, FSIS
- Why you have been asked to participate
 - You are consumers who use some of the products we want to talk about
 - Your experiences as consumers are important to USDA
 - You have opinions and ideas that we'd like to know about
- How the discussion will work
 - Session will last less than 2 hours
 - Session is being audio- and videotaped, but in summary reports no names will be attached to responses
 - USDA is viewing from behind the one-way mirror
 - We would like the discussion to be open and informal and encourage interaction
 - We would like to hear from everyone in the group
 - One person talks at a time
 - No right or wrong answers or ideas—we want YOUR opinions
 - Silence or turn off cell phones
 - Although we are talking about food safety topics, we are not food safety experts so we may not be able to answer all of your questions. We will provide information on food safety at the end of the session.
- Participant introductions

- First name and favorite food to prepare at home

II. Complete Worksheet (10 minutes)

Food Products	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chicken and mashed potatoes dinner• Chicken bites• Pepperoni pizza• Chicken Cordon Bleu	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Breaded chicken nuggets• Hamburger patties• Chicken pot pie• Lean Pockets®• Breaded chicken Kiev

- *[Distribute worksheet.]* As you can see, we have nine frozen meat and poultry products displayed on the table. In just a minute, I would like you to look at each product and complete this worksheet. On the worksheet, first indicate whether you have ever prepared each product or a product similar to it at home.
 - *[Hold up Chicken Pot Pie.]* For example, you may not have prepared this exact brand of chicken pot pie, but you may have prepared a chicken, beef, or turkey pot pie made by the same or different company.
- Also, on the worksheet, indicate whether you think the food product is ready-to-eat or not-ready-to-eat. *[Refer to flip chart.]*

Definitions

A meat and poultry product that has been processed by cooking, drying, or another method to destroy all harmful bacteria is called **ready-to-eat**. A ready-to-eat meat or poultry product may be heated before eating to make it taste better, but the product does not require cooking for safety.

A meat and poultry product that has not been sufficiently treated to destroy all harmful bacteria is called **not-ready-to-eat**. A not-ready-to-eat meat or poultry product requires cooking for safety. If you do not thoroughly cook a not-ready-to-eat product before eating it, you may get sick from foodborne illness or food poisoning.

- Not-ready-to-eat products require cooking for safety and ready-to-eat products do not require cooking for safety. For example, you may heat a can of chicken noodle soup before eating it because you enjoy a hot cup of soup. However, because chicken noodle soup is fully cooked, you would not get sick if you ate it cold.
- Are there any questions about the difference between ready-to-eat and not ready-to-eat food products?
- Are there any other questions before we get started?
- We'll take about 10 minutes to complete the worksheet.
- Please feel free to pick up and look at each food product displayed on the table.

- When you are finished, please turn your worksheet over.

III. Review Responses on Product Type (RTE versus NRTE) (15 minutes)

1. Now let's discuss your answers to the worksheet. *[Ask about the following products: chicken and mashed potato dinner, chicken pot pie, chicken bites, Chicken Kiev, and Chicken Cordon Bleu. For each of the products, ask respondents the following questions.]*
 - Do you think the [food product] is ready-to-eat or not-ready-to-eat?
 - Why do you think the product is ready-to-eat or not-ready-to-eat? *(Probe: type of product, something on the product label)*
 - What information, if any, did you use on the product label to make your decision?
2. What are the characteristics of meat and poultry products that are not-ready-to-eat and require cooking for safety? *[List on flip chart.]*
3. What are the characteristics of meat and poultry products that are ready-to-eat and do not require cooking for safety. *[List on flip chart.]*
4. How do you decide whether a product is ready-to-eat versus not-ready-to-eat. *[Probe: labeling, physical appearance, past experience.]*

IV. Discuss Understanding of Preparation Instructions for Packaged, Frozen Meat and Poultry Products (30 minutes)

1. When preparing a frozen food product for the first time, how often do you read the directions or instructions on the package?
 - What determines whether you read the instruction?
 - If you do not read the instructions, how do you know how to prepare the product?
 - How important is it to you to follow the instructions?
2. Some of you said you read the instructions on the labels to complete the worksheet. Do you think the instructions for one type of product, like frozen, breaded and stuffed chicken products, apply to all frozen, breaded and stuffed chicken products, or do you think they are brand specific?
3. Do you think you could get sick if you do not properly follow the cooking instructions for frozen foods, like pot pies, frozen breaded and stuffed chicken products, or frozen entrees? Why or why not?
4. *[Hold up Lean Pockets® box and refer to statement on flipchart.]* On the Lean Pocket's® package under the "cooking table," there is the statement, "These cooking instructions were developed using an 1100 watt microwave oven. Since ovens vary, cooking times may require adjusting." There are also similar statements on some of the other frozen products.

- In your own words, explain what this statement means. Why do you think it says this?
 - Do you usually follow such instructions or not?
 - Do you think you could get sick if you prepared the product in an 800 watt microwave and you do not properly make adjustments to the cooking time, as the statement says? Why or why not?
 - What is the wattage of your microwave oven?
5. *[Hold up pizza box, then the pot pie and refer to statement on flipchart.]* On the pizza box above the “microwave directions” there is the statement, “Do not eat pizza without cooking to 165°F.” Also, on the pot pie box above the cooking instructions, there is a similar statement, “This product must be cooked to an internal temperature greater than 165°F prior to eating.”
- In your own words, explain what these statements mean. Why do you think it mentions a specific temperature?
 - What does it mean by “internal temperature”?
 - Do you usually follow such instructions or not?
 - Do you ever check the internal temperature with a food thermometer when preparing frozen packaged foods? Why or why not?
6. *[Hold up frozen chicken dinner and refer to statement on flipchart.]* The cooking instructions state, “Pull back film and stir. Replace film.”
- In your own words, explain what these statements mean. Why do you think you need to do this?
 - Do you think this is a requirement or just a suggestion?
 - Is this something you usually do when preparing frozen dinners and entrees? Why or why not?
 - The cooking instructions also state, “Let stand in microwave 1-2 minutes, stir, and enjoy.” In your own words, explain what this statement means. Why do you think you need to do this?
 - Is this something you usually do when preparing frozen dinners and entrees? Why or why not?
 - Do you think this is a requirement or just a suggestion?
7. *[Hold up Chicken Kiev and refer to statement on flipchart.]* Under the cooking instructions there is the statement, “Do not microwave.” Why do you think it says this?
- Do you think you would ever use the microwave to prepare this product?
 - Do you think the product is fully cooked or not? Why?

- The label states, “Bake in a preheated oven for a minimum of 30 minutes.” How important is it to preheat your oven before cooking this product? Would you? Why or why not?
- The label also states, “Uncooked: For safety, cook to a minimum internal temperature of 165°F measured by a food thermometer.” How important is it to use a food thermometer to check the temperature of this product?
- How do you think you would use a food thermometer to check the doneness of frozen foods? [Probe: Before/after standing time; one or multiple places] Would you? Why or why not?
- If you do not have a food thermometer, how would you know if the product reached 165°F?
- Do you think you could get sick if you do not cook the product to 165°F?

8. *[Pass out mock label.]* Now consider the following label:

Raw: Do not microwave to help prevent foodborne illness caused by eating raw or undercooked poultry.

- In your own words, please tell me what you think this label means.
 - What do you think “undercooked” means? [Probe: *not fully cooked*]
 - Why do you think the label says not to microwave undercooked poultry?
 - Describe the differences between the following terms: “fully cooked,” “undercooked,” and “raw.” [Probe: *in terms of safety*].
9. *Do you think someone makes sure that instructions on packaged, frozen foods will result in a safe product if properly followed?*
- If yes, who? [Probe: *government vs. manufacturer of product*]
 - If no, should someone do this? Who? [Probe: *government vs. manufacturer of product*]
10. *Some consumers have gotten foodborne illness or food poisoning because they did not properly following the instructions on packaged, frozen foods. Thus, it is important that consumers follow the manufacturer’s instructions, such as instructions to use a food thermometer and to adjust microwave cooking times, so that they safely prepare these foods. Do you have any suggestions on how the instructions on any of these food products can be improved?*
- What would encourage you to use a food thermometer to check the doneness of packaged, frozen foods?
11. In addition to food labels, what other ways would you like to receive information on how to prepare packaged, frozen foods? (Probe: *point-of-purchase, Web site, brochure*)

12. What individuals or organizations do you trust to provide information on how to safely prepare packaged, frozen foods? (*Probe: food manufacturer, government, other*)

V. Safe Cooking Temperatures for Raw Meat and Poultry (25 minutes)

1. Now let's talk about a different topic--raw meat and poultry products like steaks, roasts, pork chops, and chicken breasts. How do you know when raw meat and poultry products are fully cooked and safe to eat? [*Probe: check internal temperature using a food thermometer*]
2. USDA recommends that consumers cook raw meat and poultry products to specific temperatures to kill any harmful bacteria that may be present. For example, USDA recommends that consumers cook ground beef to 160°F and poultry to 165°F.
 - Tell me how you would know whether the food has reached the safe temperature. [*If not mentioned*] USDA recommends that consumers use a food thermometer to check the safety of raw meat and poultry.
 - Do you have a food thermometer?
 - o If yes, do you use it?
 - o If yes, for what types of meat and poultry? [*Probe: small vs. large cuts*]
 - o If yes, how often do you use a food thermometer?
3. [*Pass out mock label.*] Please read the following label:

Cook raw beef, lamb, pork, and veal roasts, steaks, and chops to an internal temperature of 145°F. Remove from heat for at least three minutes before eating to ensure food safety.

- In your own words, please tell me what you think this label means.
- What would you call that three minute period of time? [*Probe: "sit," "stand," "rest," "hold"*]
- Are there other words you might use to describe this three minute period of time?
- In your opinion, what term would best describe this three minute period of time?
- Where should food "sit"? [*Probe: on a plate, on the countertop, in the oven/pan, etc.*]
- Why do you think the product needs to set for three minutes?
- Do you think the three minute set time is a requirement or just a suggestion?

- Why does letting the product set ensure food safety?
- Would you follow these instructions or not? [*Probe: Would you let the product set or eat it immediately?*]
- Do you have any concerns about this label or not? If yes, what?
- Is anything in particular confusing or hard to understand about this label?
- Do you have any suggestions on how this label could be improved to encourage you and other consumers to follow these instructions?
- Is there additional information that you would like to see included on this label?
- Where would you most likely notice this label and pay attention to it?
- In addition to a food label, how else should this information be communicated to consumers?

4. [*Pass out mock label.*] Please read the following label:

Cook raw beef, lamb, pork, and veal roasts, steaks, and chops to an internal temperature of 160°F.

- Why do you think a higher internal temperature is required if there is no set or stand time? [*Probe understanding of instantaneous cook time*]
- Which way is safer, or do you think they are they both the same?
- Which way would make the meat more tender, or do you think they are they both the same?

5. [*Pass out cooking instructions.*] Please read the following instructions from USDA's Web site on how to cook different types of beef roasts.

Approximate Beef Cooking Times °F				
Type of Beef	Size	Oven Temperature	Cooking Time	Internal Temperature
Rib Roast, bone in	4 to 6 lbs.	Roast 325°	23-25 min./lb.	Medium rare 145°
Rib Roast, boneless rolled	4 to 6 lbs.	Roast 325°	Add 5-8 min./lb. to times above	Medium rare 145°
Round or Rump Roast	2 1/2 to 4 lbs.	Roast 325°	30-35 min./lb.	Medium rare 145°

- How often do you cook beef roasts?
- In your own words, please explain the relationship between oven temperature, cooking time, and internal temperature.
- What if you wanted a more tender roast? What could you do?
[Probe: cook in oven cooking bag, covered pan with moisture]
- How would you know the roast was safe to eat if you cooked it in an oven cooking bag, covered pan with moisture?

VI. Understanding of “Natural” Claim

1. What does natural mean when you see it on a label? *[Probe: does it have anything to do with how the animal is raised?]*
2. Have you seen products labeled as “natural”? If yes, what types of products? *[Probe: meat, poultry]*
3. Do you think a product made with more than one ingredient can be labeled as “natural?” If so, what does it mean when a product made with more than one ingredient is labeled as “natural”?

VII. Use-by and Freeze-by Dates on Meat Products Packaged Using Carbon Monoxide (25 minutes)

1. How do you usually store raw meat products like ground beef, roasts, and pork chops at home? *[Probe: refrigerator vs. freezer, storage time for refrigerator]*
2. How can you tell if raw meat products are fresh and are safe to eat?
 - *[If color not mentioned.]* Can you rely on color as an indicator of freshness of raw meat products? Why or why not?
3. *[If use of dates not mentioned.]* Have you noticed use-by or freeze-by dates on raw meat products? If yes, what does this information mean to you?
4. How do you use use-by or freeze-by dates on raw meat products?
5. Do you always follow the use-by or freeze-by dates? If no, in what situations do you not follow the use-by or freeze-by dates?
6. What might happen if you don’t follow the use-by or freeze-by dates?
7. Have you heard that manufacturers can package meat products using carbon monoxide? What do you think the carbon monoxide does?
 - *[Read from flip chart]* Carbon monoxide is used to maintain the color of the meat while it is still in the package. It does not become part of the product. It disappears as soon as the package is open. The government has determined that it is safe for manufacturers to use carbon monoxide in meat packaging as long as the product has a

use-by or freeze-by date to ensure that the product shelf life ends before spoilage begins.

8. What do you think about using carbon monoxide for meat packaging?
[Probe: can't tell whether product is fresh by looking at color]
9. Do you think the label should indicate whether carbon monoxide was used to package the product? Why or why not?
 - If yes, what do you think the label should say?
10. Some consumer groups have expressed concern about the use of carbon monoxide maintaining a red color of the meat past the time of spoilage. Now let's look at a few labels that provide information on addressing this concern *[Pass out mock label.]* Consider the following label:

Color is not an accurate indicator of freshness. Refer to use-by or freeze-by date.

- In your own words, please tell me what you think this label means.
- Do you have any concerns about this label or not? If yes, what?
- Is anything in particular confusing or hard to understand about this label?
- Do you have any suggestions on how this label could be improved to encourage you and other consumers to follow these instructions?
- Is there additional information that you would like to see included on this label?

- 11.*[Pass out mock label.]* Now consider the following label:

Packaged in a protective atmosphere to prevent color change. Refer to use-by or freeze-by date.

- In your own words, please tell me what you think this label means.
- Do you have any concerns about this label or not? If yes, what?
- Is anything in particular confusing or hard to understand about this label?
- Do you have any suggestions on how this label could be improved to encourage you and other consumers to follow these instructions?
- Is there additional information that you would like to see included on this label?

- 12.*[Pass out mock label.]* Now consider the following label:

Color maintained with carbon monoxide in packaging atmosphere. Refer to use-by or freeze-by date.

- In your own words, please tell me what you think this label means.
- Do you have any concerns about this label or not? If yes, what?
- Is anything in particular confusing or hard to understand about this label?
- Do you have any suggestions on how this label could be improved to encourage you and other consumers to follow these instructions?
- Is there additional information that you would like to see included on this label?

13. Where would you most likely notice and pay attention to labels that have to do with carbon monoxide packaging and use of use-by or freeze-by dates?

14. In addition to a food label, how else should this information be communicated to consumers?

VIII. Wrap Up

- Any other comments or questions?
- Distribute Be Food Safe® brochures and magnets.
- Thank you for participating.
- Please pick up your cash honorarium and free gift (food thermometer) on the way out.