Cooking Meat? Check the New Recommended Temperatures 🔲

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By Diane Van, Manager, USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline

On May 24, USDA made some important changes in their recommended cooking temperatures for meats.

Here's What You Need To Know:

- **Cooking Whole Cuts of Pork:** USDA has lowered the recommended safe cooking temperature for whole cuts of pork from 160 ⁰F to 145 ⁰F with the addition of a three-minute rest time. Cook pork, roasts, and chops to 145 ⁰F as measured with a food thermometer before removing meat from the heat source, with a three-minute rest time before carving or consuming. This will result in a product that is both safe and at its best quality—juicy and tender.

- **Cooking Whole Cuts of Other Meats:** For beef, veal, and lamb cuts, the safe temperature remains unchanged at 145 ⁰F, but the department has added a three-minute rest time as part of its cooking recommendations.

What Cooking Temperatures Didn't Change?

- **Ground Meats:** This change does not apply to **ground** meats, including beef, veal, lamb, and pork, which should be cooked to 160 ⁰F and do not require a rest time.

- **Poultry:** The safe cooking temperature for all poultry products, including ground chicken and turkey, stays the same at 165 ⁰F.

What Is Rest Time?

"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 the heat source, its temperature remains constant or continues to rise, which destroys harmful bacteria.

Why Did the Recommendations Change?

- It's 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 ⁰F, the previously recommended temperature, with no rest time. The new cooking recommendations 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 a safe product.

- Having a single time and temperature combination for all meat will help consumers remember the temperature at which they can be sure the meat is safe to eat.
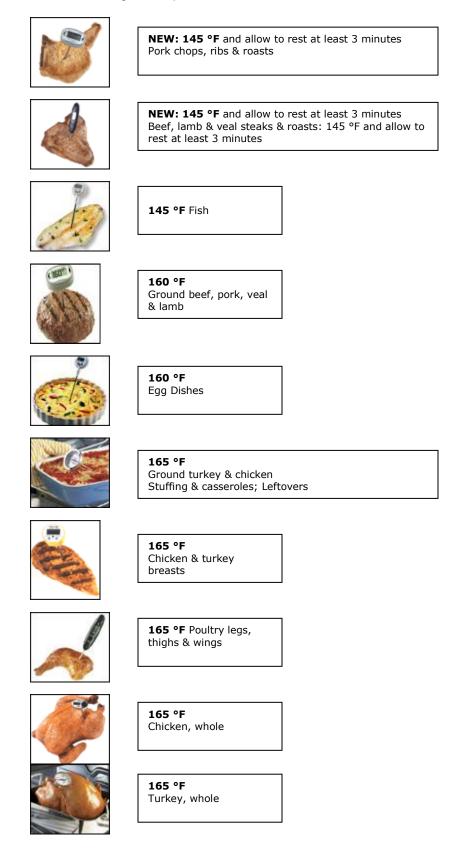
How Do You Use a Food Thermometer?

Place the food thermometer in the thickest part of the food. It should not touch bone, fat, or gristle. Start checking the temperature toward the end of cooking, but before you expect it to be done. Be sure to clean your food thermometer with hot soapy water before and after each use.

To see where to place a food thermometer in different cuts of meat, see [Thermometer Placement and Temperatures](). For more information on cooking temperatures for all types of food, see the [Safe Minimum Cooking Temperatures chart]()

Thermometer Placement & Temperatures

The food thermometer should be placed in the thickest part of the food and should not be touching bone, fat, or gristle. Begin checking the temperature toward the end of cooking, but before the food is expected to be "done." Make sure to clean your food thermometer with hot soapy water before and after each use!

(Update: May 24, 2011) Cook all raw beef, pork, lamb and veal steaks, chops, and roasts to a minimum internal temperature of 145 °F as measured with a food thermometer before removing meat from the heat source. For safety and quality, allow meat to rest for at least three minutes before carving or consuming. For reasons of personal preference, consumers may choose to cook meat to higher temperatures.

NEW: 145 °F and allow to rest at least 3 minutes
Pork chops, ribs & roasts

NEW: 145 °F and allow to rest at least 3 minutes
Beef, lamb & veal steaks & roasts: 145 °F and allow to rest at least 3 minutes

145 °F Fish

160 °F
Ground beef, pork, veal & lamb

160 °F
Egg Dishes

165 °F
Ground turkey & chicken
Stuffing & casseroles; Leftovers

165 °F
Chicken & turkey breasts

165 °F Poultry legs, thighs & wings

165 °F
Chicken, whole

165 °F
Turkey, whole

Safe Minimum Cooking Temperatures

Use this chart and a food thermometer to ensure that meat, poultry, seafood, and other cooked foods reach a safe minimum internal temperature.

Remember, you can't tell whether meat is safely cooked by looking at it. Any cooked, uncured red meats – including pork – can be pink, even when the meat has reached a safe internal temperature.

Why the Rest Time is Important

After you remove meat from a grill, oven, or other heat source, allow it to rest for the specified amount of time. During the rest time, its temperature remains constant or continues to rise, which destroys harmful germs.

Category	Food	Temperature (°F)	Rest Time
Ground Meat & Meat Mixtures	Beef, Pork, Veal, Lamb	160	None
	Turkey, Chicken	165	None
Fresh Beef, Veal, Lamb	Steaks, roasts, chops	145	3 minutes
Poultry	Chicken & Turkey, whole	165	None
	Poultry breasts, roasts	165	None
	Poultry thighs, legs, wings	165	None
	Duck & Goose	165	None
	Stuffing (cooked alone or in bird)	165	None
Pork and Ham	Fresh pork	145	3 minutes
	Fresh ham (raw)	145	3 minutes
	Precooked ham (to reheat)	140	None
Eggs & Egg Dishes	Eggs	Cook until yolk and white are firm	None
	Egg dishes	160	None
Leftovers & Casseroles	Leftovers	165	None
	Casseroles	165	None
Seafood	Fin Fish	145 or cook until flesh is opaque and separates easily with a fork.	None
	Shrimp, lobster, and crabs	Cook until flesh is pearly and opaque.	None
	Clams, oysters, and mussels	Cook until shells open during cooking.	None
	Scallops	Cook until flesh is milky white or opaque and firm.	None