

## **New research reveals 52% of people do not wash the chopping board after preparing raw meat**

**With the barbeque season upon us, *safefood* and celebrity chef Neven Maguire team up to encourage good food safety practices**

**Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2007:** *safefood* has teamed up with celebrity chef Neven Maguire to encourage consumers to follow good food safety practices when preparing and cooking food. New *safefood* research revealed that when preparing food, 52% of people chopped lettuce on a chopping board that had been used for raw meat without washing it first. This practice is a cause for concern as it can potentially expose the consumer to the perils of food poisoning.

Dr. Thomas Quigley, Director, Science and Technical, *safefood* explains, "The spread of dangerous bacteria such as *E. coli* and *Campylobacter* through cross contamination is extremely common when preparing a meal, either for a BBQ or a meal indoors. It is important that different cooking utensils and clean or separate chopping boards are used for raw and ready-to-eat foods to prevent the spread of dangerous bacteria."

Consumers were observed in a test kitchen and the results revealed that of those that did wash the chopping board, 66% did not wash it properly with hot soapy water. 32% of participants still had bacteria from raw meat on their hands when they left the kitchen. Also, 90% of kitchens tested positive for raw meat bacteria at the end of food preparation <sup>1</sup>.

"Our research also revealed that two thirds (66%) of people did not check to make sure beef burgers were cooked thoroughly by cutting into the burger. A quarter of the burgers were also found to be underdone<sup>1</sup>. Meat that has been minced, skewered or rolled such as burgers, sausages and kebabs should be cooked thoroughly and never served rare or pink in the middle. When meat is

chopped or minced, any bacteria present are moved around and into the centre of the food. These meats must be cooked thoroughly until piping hot all the way through, the juices run clear and until there is no pink meat left to kill any bacteria that could cause food poisoning," Dr Quigley continued.

Supporting **safefood's** focus on food safety, Neven Maguire said: "Cooking on the barbecue can be a fun and relaxing way of eating healthily over the summer months. However, putting together a healthy balanced menu for friends and family is pointless if the meat is not cooked thoroughly. Good food hygiene practices such as hand washing and using separate utensils and clean or separate chopping boards for salads and raw meat are easy to follow, and prevent the spread of bacteria. By following **safefood's** advice eating outdoors will be a safe, enjoyable and healthy experience – and all you will have to worry about is the weather!"

**safefood's** advice for preparing food to enjoy barbecues and outdoor eating is:

- always wash chopping boards with hot soapy water after preparing raw meat or use separate chopping boards to prevent the spread of dangerous bacteria to other foods
- use separate cooking utensils and plates for raw meat and cooked foods
- always keep ready-to-eat foods such as salads and cooked meat completely separate from raw meat – harmful bacteria in raw meat, poultry and meat juices can contaminate cooked food and lead to food poisoning
- always wash your hands before and after handling any food, particularly raw meat
- make sure that your meat is properly cooked – it should be piping hot all the whole way through, the juices should run clear and there should be no pink meat left
- when cooking your meat, turn it frequently to ensure it is cooked evenly
- marinade used on raw meat should not be used to coat vegetables or cooked meat

- keep all your perishable food in the fridge or cool box for as long as possible – germs can multiply rapidly as food reaches higher than normal storage temperature

Further food safety advice for consumers is available by calling the **safefood** helpline 1850 404 567 or visiting the **safefood** website, [www.safefood.eu](http://www.safefood.eu)

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References:

- <sup>1</sup> *safefood* research RESR 08-2007 “Assessment of critical control points during domestic food preparation” conducted by University College Dublin and University of Ulster at Jordanstown, April 2008.

Deleted: For further information please contact:¶

Kate FitzGerald/Niamh

Burdett or

Dermot Moriarty¶

WHPR

**safefood**¶

01 6690030/ 086 387

3083 (Kate) / 086 608

6764 (Niamh) 01 448

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