Preparing Foods

When preparing foods, it is important to be clean and keep raw foods kept separate from other foods.

**Keeping things clean**

- Food preparers should wash hands when entering the kitchen and frequently during food preparation. Wash hands with soap and warm water, scrubbing vigorously for 20 seconds and dry with a disposable paper towel. Clean hands before and after handling food, after using the bathroom, after handling garbage and anytime you change tasks.

- Keep surfaces clean. Use paper towels and clean cloths to wipe kitchen surfaces and spills. Sanitize surfaces regularly, especially after working with raw meat, poultry, and seafood. Use 1 teaspoon bleach mixed with one quart of water as a sanitizing solution for surfaces and utensils.

- Wash cutting boards, utensils and food preparation surfaces with hot, soapy water after preparing each food item, before starting the next task. If possible, use one cutting board for fresh produce and a separate one for raw meat, poultry and seafood. Replace cutting boards that are worn or have deep grooves.

**Handling Produce** - Wash all fruits & vegetables with clean, cold water before use. Thick skinned produce may be scrubbed with a brush. Do not use soap.

**Thawing foods**

Never thaw food at room temperature.

- Thaw food in the refrigerator.
- Thawing in the microwave and cook immediately.
- If food is in an airtight wrapper:
  - Make sure the sink or container that will hold food is clean, fill with **cold** water, and then submerge food. Change the water every 30 minutes or
  - Submerge the food in constantly running cold water.

Remember to refrigerate or cook food immediately after thawing.
**Marinades**
Marinades are ideal for adding flavor and tenderizing foods. To do it right:
- Always marinade in the refrigerator.
- Use food-grade plastic, stainless steel or glass containers.
- Make a batch of sauce for marinating raw meat, poultry, fish or seafood and separate batch for applying to cooked food. As an alternative, **boil** the marinade for raw products **before** applying to cooked food.
- Never reuse marinade for other foods.

**Stuffing**
Stuffing can be prepared ahead of time, kept in the refrigerator, then placed into the poultry or meat **just before cooking**.

For more information:
- [Do It Right-Part 2: Cross-contamination](#) (video)