

IMPACT



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Now They Use a Meat Thermometer to be Sure It's Done!

The Situation

Only 6 percent of home cooks use a food thermometer for hamburgers, and only 10 percent use a food thermometer for chicken breasts, according to the latest data from the Food Safety Survey conducted by the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Studies have shown that using a food thermometer is the only way to tell if harmful bacteria have been destroyed. The FSIS reports that even if hamburgers look fully cooked, one in four hamburgers may not be safely cooked. Using a food thermometer not only keeps your family safe from harmful bacteria, but it also helps you to avoid overcooking, giving you a safe and flavorful product.

Our Response

Idaho's Extension Nutrition Program (ENP) includes two community-based programs, Food Stamp Nutrition Education (FSNE) and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). The ENP teaches limited-resource adults how to stretch their food dollars to provide tasty, safe, low-cost, healthy meals for their families. Lessons cover a variety of topics on nutrition, food buying, food safety, and family budgeting.

Major goals/objectives of ENP are to improve the household's safe handling, preparation and storage of food. One of the questions asked in a survey of Magic Valley area clients was: "Do you use a meat thermometer?" Ninety-four percent of the 160

participants responded with a "No" answer. Many of them stated that they did not own a meat thermometer.

As a result of these statistics, a grant was applied for from the Idaho Beef Council to purchase meat thermometers. The goal was for participants to understand the importance of using a meat thermometer to prevent food borne illness by determining endpoint cooking temperature of small cuts of meat. The grant provided 2,000 meat thermometers to be used in the Extension Nutrition Program across the State.

Program Outcomes

More than 1,500 meat thermometers have been distributed through the Extension Nutrition Program. Results from a follow up survey indicated that 78% of the clients now use a meat thermometer to make certain that meat is cooked to the proper temperature. Program participants learned about the different kinds of food thermometers, how to insert the meat thermometer for accuracy, and proper cooking temperatures.



Testimonials from clients after receiving the thermometers:

*“Thank you so much for the meat thermometer. Now I don’t have to guess about when the roast is done. We’re not very wealthy so needless to say a thermometer isn’t something that is at the top of the list for things we need. It’s always a want or a wish. I need want no more. Thank you so much.”
Shere (EFNEP graduate)*

*“Using a food thermometer is (a) very useful tool when cooking. Now, since I have tried it I really love and will continue on using it. I use(d) to rely on my own eye and trust it would be done. I baked a chicken and use (sic) the thermometer and didn’t have to stay right by it all the time. Also I used the thermometer when I make (sic) a meat loaf.”
Patricia (EFNEP graduate)*

*“I thought the program was wonderful. I did try the meat thermometer and I find it very useful to tell when salmon was done. Thank you very much.”
Melahana (EFNEP graduate)*

“I’ve learned to cook meat and how to use the thermometer! I’m not afraid to cook meat anymore!” Yvonne (EFNEP graduate)

For More Information

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