INSPECTION FOR CLEAN PRODUCTS

Washing that narrow space between your refrigerator and your sink counter may be inconvenient, but it's an important health safeguard. Meat packers and poultry processors, too, must practice strict sanitation to insure that the large quantities of products they prepare for commercial distribution are as clean and wholesome as the dinner you want to prepare and serve your family.

SANITATION GUIDELINES

USDA's Consumer and Marketing Service sets up regulations and offers guidelines for the facilities used by food processors. These guidelines have been developed during more than 60 years of inspection experience.

The guidelines are flexible, but make sure that all plants produce sanitary, wholesome products under rules common to public health requirements for food processing.

For instance, equipment must be easily disassembled—like the beaters that drop out of your mixer with the push of a button—so they can be cleaned easily. Surfaces coming in contact with food must be smooth—like the counter in your kitchen that can be wiped clean quickly and efficiently. There must be no crevices and no sharp corners which cannot be kept clean.
There are also guidelines for floor plans, for water supply, for waste disposal, for lighting, for ventilation, for refrigeration. And all the corners in a plant should be rounded so that they can be cleaned thoroughly in minimum time.

CONTINUOUS CHECKING

All plant layouts, equipment, and facilities must be approved by USDA to make sure they
meet all requirements before a plant is granted Federal inspection. Requirements are designed to facilitate plant operations and to provide ample space for inspection, as well as to guarantee that the consumer buys a wholesome product processed under sanitary conditions.

An inspector examines the equipment in a plant to make sure that it is clean before work begins each day. He then checks all the operations in the slaughtering or processing plant to make sure that products are handled properly and that equipment is cleaned as often as necessary.

To doublecheck the cleanliness and safety of the products, the inspector can send samples of products to laboratories to have them tested by microbiologists or bacteriologists.

**COOPERATIVE INSPECTION**

Federal inspection is required of all plants that ship meat or poultry across State lines or in foreign commerce. The Wholesome Meat Act of 1967 and the Wholesome Poultry Products Act of 1968 brought many small plants under inspection. Each law authorizes Federal help to the States to extend strict inspection to plants that process products for sale only within State lines.

Both USDA and the States have a vital role in upgrading the sanitation in meat and poultry plants. They also are working together to clean up or close down the few plants doing business within a State that are identified as a particular hazard to health.

**CONSUMER ROLE**

Many steps are taken to assure you that the meat and poultry products you buy are wholesome and clean. It is up to you to make sure that you buy these products from stores that handle them carefully, and that you carry sanitary practices into your own kitchen. Your family's health depends on it.
CLEAN PRODUCTS IN YOUR HOME

When buying, storing, handling, and cooking meat and poultry products, remember that cleanliness is of the utmost importance to serving a wholesome product. After a product reaches you, the task of guarding its wholesomeness is in your hands.

Don’t buy torn, damaged, or dirty packages when shopping. Try to shop only in stores with well-kept storage and display cases.

At home, store meat or poultry in leak-proof packages to avoid the possibility of their contaminating other foods.

Never prepare other foods on the same surface used to prepare meat and poultry without sanitizing that surface. Be particularly careful when handling foods that are not cooked or are only partially cooked, such as salads.

Before preparing poultry for cooking, wash it thoroughly.

Keep your kitchen sanitary, carefully cleaning any cracks or crevices on appliances. Use soap and water, or a suitable cleanser that destroys bacteria, to sanitize:

- all surfaces on which raw meat or poultry has been prepared, especially wooden cutting boards;

- all equipment that has been used for preparing these products before using the equipment for handling the same products after cooking or for preparing other foods, dismantling all equipment that does come apart;

- all containers that have been used to store, cook, or serve meat or poultry;

- all towels or cleaning cloths used in the kitchen;

- and, of course, your hands.
Here are the marks of Federal inspection —

This is the stamp put on meat carcasses. It is only stamped on the major cuts of the carcass, so it may not appear on the roast or steak you buy.

You will find this mark on every prepackaged processed meat product — soups to spreads — that has been federally inspected.

This is the mark used on federally inspected fresh or frozen poultry or processed poultry products.

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