As temperatures climb this summer, your thoughts may drift to the wonderful smell of burgers sizzling on your outdoor grill. Before preparing any meats on your grill remember to follow these six basic food safety rules.

1. Always wash your hands and wrists with warm, soapy water for at least 20 seconds before, during and after handling food. Bacteria thrive in moisture, so get rid of the moisture on your hands by drying your hands thoroughly to remove any remaining disease-causing microorganisms.

2. Use separate utensils, cutting boards and serving dishes for raw and cooked foods. Thoroughly wash each with warm, soapy water before re-using. Never serve grilled food on the same platter that held raw meat, poultry or fish. This is cross-contamination and you can make yourself and others sick if you do not pay attention to this important food-safety rule.

3. Marinate foods in the refrigerator, not on the counter or outdoors. If some of the marinade is to be used as a sauce on the cooked food, reserve a portion separately before adding the raw meat, poultry or seafood. Don’t reuse marinade from raw meat unless you boil it to 165°F to destroy any bacteria from the raw meat.

4. You can partially cook meat or poultry ahead of time and finish it up on the grill ONLY if the meat goes immediately from the microwave or range to the grill. Think of it as all one cooking process and cook the meat thoroughly all at once. If you must cook ahead, you can also cook the meat completely and then cool it fast for reheating on the grill later.

5. Always use a food thermometer to make sure your grilled meats reach safe internal temperatures. Checking the color of the meat is not enough. For example, hamburgers should be cooked to 160°F; poultry to 165°F; pork to 145 °F; and large cuts of beef to 145 °F for medium rare, 160°F for medium. Insert a food thermometer horizontally into the center of the burger, steak or poultry for 10-15 seconds to register the internal temperature.

6. Never leave perishable food out of the refrigerator for more than two hours. When outdoor temperatures reach 90°F, food shouldn’t be left out for more than an hour.

Don’t take any chances with your family and friends health: keep cold foods cold, and hot foods hot – and when in doubt, throw it out.

Source: Jeannie Nichols, Michigan State University Extension. “Six food safety tips when grilling.” For more information on nutrition, food safety, health, or family and child development contact the Marais des Cygnes Extension District, or write to fmeastwo@ksu.edu or check out our website: www.maraisdescygnes.k-state.edu