Steak, roast beef and other beef products are a favorite for many consumers. While they are safer than ground beef, they still carry many hazards consumers should beware of, especially *E. coli* O157:H7 and *Salmonella*. Consumers should take precautions with these meats.

**Food Preparation**

- Plastic bags can keep meat separated from other foods, both in the grocery cart and in the refrigerator, so that contaminated juices don’t drip onto other foods.
- Use a different cutting board to trim raw meats and prepare fresh produce. The only time it is ever safe to chop raw vegetables on the same cutting board as raw meat is if you are cooking those veggies along with the beef.
- Do not rinse meat in the sink, since bacteria can contaminate other surfaces in the kitchen.
- Wash and sanitize all utensils and surfaces immediately when handling raw beef.
- Wear disposable plastic gloves when handling raw meat. Whether or not you wear gloves, wash hands often when handling raw meat. Make sure you clean your hands and gloves thoroughly by washing with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds. Avoid contaminating surfaces in the kitchen with bacteria from the raw meat or juice.
- Never use the same platters for raw and cooked meat.
- When marinating meat at home, keep it refrigerated, taking special care not to drip marinade on kitchen surfaces. Never use the same marinade used on the raw meat as a glaze on a cooked roast.

**Cooking**

- Always cook roasts and steaks so that an instant-read thermometer in the thickest part of the meat says 160 degrees.
- In restaurants you should order steak cooked medium-well or well-done, since restaurant chefs may not know if the meat they are cooking has been needle or blade tenderized. (What’s that? See below.)

**After Cooking**

- Not ready to sit down to eat yet? Keep cooked meat in a warm oven so that the meat stays between 140 and 165 degrees.
- Do not serve cooked meat more than 2 hours after cooking.

**Bacteria don’t know whether they are at a 5-star restaurant, expensive grocery store, or on a local farm—so practice “defensive eating” every time, no matter where you get your food, to protect yourself and your family.**

**WHAT IS MECHANICALLY TENDERIZED BEEF?**

Cow manure can carry bacteria that are dangerous for consumers, including *E. coli* O157:H7. When the animal is slaughtered, microscopic traces of manure can get on the meat and make you sick.

The beef industry knows that tenderness is very important to consumers but not all cuts of meat are naturally tender. The beef industry has begun tenderizing meat to improve its “mouth feel” for consumers. Piercing the meat with blades or needles breaks up muscle fibers and connective tissue. But that process can push surface contaminants deep inside, so these products require more thorough cooking to ensure safety. USDA does not require labels on meat that has been mechanically tenderized. All beef should be prepared and cooked thoroughly; otherwise, disease causing bacteria pushed to the interior of the meat may not be cooked away. (Cooking burgers? Look at our Ground Beef Safety Sheet.)