The average American eats almost 50 pounds of pork per year, making it the third most consumed meat in the US, after beef and chicken. Pork and ham can take the form of chops, roasts, ribs or loins. These raw meats can carry a number of hazards that consumers can help control before, during and after cooking. In fact, some of the most common hazards in pork and ham could be avoided with more rapid chilling after a meal.

**Food Preparation**
- Look carefully at the label when buying and preparing ham to know whether it is raw or pre-cooked.
- 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.
- 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.
- Keep raw meats refrigerated at or below 40 degrees.
- Pork, like other meats, should never be rinsed, since bacteria can contaminate kitchen surfaces.

**Cooking**
- Cook pork so that an instant-read thermometer says 145 degrees and allow it to rest for 3 more minutes so the temperature reaches 160 degrees.
- For ground pork products (and ground meat products containing multiple meats, such as meat loaf), cook the food until an instant-read thermometer, inserted in the thickest part of the meat, reads 160 degrees.
- Although some ham products are pre-cooked, you should still reheat the ham until an instant-read thermometer reaches 140 degrees in the thickest part of the meat.
- If a package of pre-cooked ham has been opened, reheat it to be fully cooked: 145 degrees with an extra 3 minutes of resting before serving.
- Fresh, uncooked ham must always be cooked to 145 degrees and left to rest for 3 minutes to reach 160 degrees.

**After cooking**
- You should eat cooked pork and ham immediately and store leftovers in shallow containers in the refrigerator within 2 hours of cooking.
- Deli-sliced ham carries additional risks, especially for pregnant women and older adults. To ensure safety, these meats should be reheated to steaming for safety. (See our Deli Meat Safety Sheet.)

**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.**