

SANI-GRAM

Patco 
FOOD SAFETY

A Focus on Food Safety

Food Safety - Cooking Shows



Are you a food show junkie? Do you love watching chefs like Bobbie Flay, Ree Drummond, Guy Fieri, or Rachel Ray? Food safety experts from Kansas State University and Tennessee State University studied 100 cooking shows which featured 24 chefs, including those mentioned above. The shows selected for study were available on cable TV, or through a variety of online services, such as Amazon, Hulu, or Netflix. What they found is great recipes, but not so great food preparation behaviors displayed on air. Their research was published in the *Journal of Public Health*.

Foodborne illnesses occur through a number of avenues, including restaurants, grocery stores, and the home itself. Even though we hear of foodborne illnesses in the news, many consumers still believe that foodborne illness comes almost entirely from outside the home. But the home can be a large source of foodborne illness and can even be the cause of foodborne illness in the community.

Celebrity chefs have become very popular and can serve as a type of role model for consumers. They can be influential in determining food preparation and what is acceptable in food. Even children have been shown to be aware of, and potentially influenced by celebrity chefs. However, good food safety practices have been shown to be poorly followed on some of their television shows.

All of the episodes featured at least one meat dish, the most common meat being beef, followed by seafood, chicken, and pork. After handling meat items, only 7 of the chefs were shown washing their hands and not after every time they touched the raw meat. One chef did wear gloves on occasion when handling raw meat. Several of them were shown just rinsing their hands after touching the raw meat. Half of the chefs did mention that hands should be washed after handling the raw product. Nearly all of them were seen handling uncooked meat without washing their hands during the entire show.

19 of the chefs were observed adding food using their hands when the food would not receive any further cooking. Half of them ate while cooking during some part of the program and several of them sampled the food using their hands during or after cooking. Combined with the lack of handwashing after touching raw meat, this could lead to foodborne illness if viewers followed the example of the chefs.

Some of the chefs changed or washed their cutting board, but others were shown cutting Ready-to-Eat items on the same cutting board used for the raw meat. None of the chefs who washed or changed the cutting board were shown to use the same board for Ready-to-Eat foods and raw meat. In some cases, Ready-to-Eat foods were shown touching uncooked meat items.

Other incorrect food safety behaviors observed included licking their fingers, touching their hair or dirty clothing or things and then touching food again.

The study tracked the methods used by the chefs to determine whether or not the meat was finished cooking, checking to see if the method recommended by the USDA, FDA, and other agencies was followed- using a

food thermometer. Only six of the chefs gave temperature information. Nearly all of them indicated that color was an acceptable method to determine the doneness, followed closely by time. The study noted that many consumers do not know the correct minimum cooking temperature that needs to be achieved, especially since recipes typically do not give that information.

As stated by Edgar Chambers of Kansas State, one of the authors of the research study, "All celebrity chefs have to do is mention these things as they go along: 'Remember to wash your hands,' 'Don't forget to change out your cutting board,' or 'I washed my hands here' – which some chefs did do. "They don't have to show it on television but they should remind viewers that there are safety issues involved in food preparation." Chambers went on to say that viewers may know proper food safety, but because people are creatures of habit, they may rely on practices that they are familiar with instead of adopting safe recommendations. As consumers observe this unsafe behavior on the cooking shows, it could lead them to believe that the food safety behaviors they know are not really all that important or that poor behaviors are acceptable. Celebrity chefs can help make viewers more likely to use their food safety practices, he said.

The idea of "good food" should include safe food. The knowledge of proper food safety practices is needed to make both of those happen. Even though the shows' producers may think of them as purely entertainment, consumers still rely on cooking shows for food safety information along with information about food preparation. The authors of this study stressed that those who produce cooking shows should include good food safety practices and information. They suggest that public health advocates should push television shows to help

educate by modeling appropriate food safety behaviors.

Chambers stated, "I think that celebrity chefs have a responsibility for entertaining us, but they also have a responsibility to give us good food. We want celebrity chefs to teach us how to make food that not only tastes good but is good for us—and part of that is good food safety."

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides these estimates:

- Each year, roughly 48 million people, or 1 in 6 Americans, get sick from a foodborne illness.
- 128,000 are hospitalized from foodborne illness
- 3,000 people die from foodborne illness.

For commercial food service facilities, BHC/Patco Food Safety recommends TOPfoam Antibacterial Hand Soap

- Kills a wide variety of disease-causing bacteria, viruses, and fungi on contact.
- Enhanced with aloe vera and Vitamin E for a soft after-feel
- Luxury foam disperses and cleans better
- Citrus spice fragrance smells clean and fresh

Sources: *Journal of Public Health*; *HowStuffWorks.com*; *ScienceDaily.com*

Ask the Expert: For any Food Safety or Sanitation questions or concerns, contact Linda Wilt via email - LWilt@bhcinc.com