Using a Food Thermometer

A food thermometer is an important kitchen tool to prevent foodborne illness when cooking at home. Many recipes may instruct you to check for "doneness" of a food by a certain color of meat or other subjective measures. However, food thermometers are the only way to ensure that food like meat is truly cooked to a safe temperature. Protect your family by using a food thermometer.

To use a food thermometer, insert it into the thickest part of the meat, wait several seconds for the temperature reading to stabilize, and compare the reading to USDA recommended safe internal temperatures. When measuring the temperature of thinner meats like burgers and chicken breasts, insert the thermometer into the side of the food so the probe will get an accurate temperature. The USDA recommends cooking steaks, roasts, and chops (beef, pork, veal, and lamb) and fish to 145°F; egg dishes and ground beef, pork, veal, and lamb to 160°F; and poultry (whether in pieces or a whole bird) to 165°F. Explain to your preschooler why you're taking the temperature of the food and let them see what the thermometer reading is. They can help you by comparing the reading to the safe internal temperature guidelines.

When buying a food thermometer, look for a digital, tip-sensitive, instant-read thermometer. Remember to clean the probe of the thermometer when you're done! Hand wash the probe in warm, soapy water, but don't submerge the whole thermometer in water.

By using a food thermometer and proper food safety practices, you'll set a good example for your preschooler as they grow up and watch you cooking with food safety in mind!

Provided by NC EFNEP, a Cooperative Extension program