BAC Down to Keep Foods Safe to Eat

“The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that there are 76 million cases of foodborne illnesses each year resulting in 325,000 hospitalizations and 5,000 deaths,” said [insert name here] County Extension Agent. That means that each year, one in four Americans suffer from a foodborne illness. Symptoms of foodborne illness include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fever, and abdominal cramps.

Consumers may have seen advice from the Partnership for Food Safety Education (www.fightbac.org) urging them to follow these four steps to safer food and fewer cases of foodborne illness: cook, clean, chill, and separate. Recently, a new campaign, BAC Down!, has been launched to increase awareness among consumers about the importance of keeping their refrigerator at the correct temperature.

Results of a 2005 survey of consumers by the Partnership for Food Safety Education revealed that only 20% use a refrigerator thermometer and only 30% say they have heard they should use a thermometer to monitor the temperature of their refrigerator. Seventy-three percent of surveyed consumers said they believe that it is likely that they would get sick if they ate food stored in a refrigerator that was not cold enough.

BAC Down! reminds consumers to “Give bacteria the cold shoulder”. According to the United States Food and Drug Administration and the United States Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service, proper refrigeration of food is one of the most effective ways to prevent foodborne illness. Harmful bacteria which can cause foodborne illness grow rapidly at warmer temperatures.

Consumers should keep their refrigerators at 40°F or below and use a refrigerator thermometer to monitor the temperature. Refrigerator thermometers are available at grocery, discount, and hardware stores and are recommended for all home refrigerators.

For more information about how to keep food safe, contact your local County Extension Agent at [insert contact information here].
Bac Down!
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November 2005

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