News Release
For Immediate Release

FOOD SAFETY MYTHBUSTERS
Texas AgriLife Extension Service joins Partnership for Food Safety Education to Debunk Common Myths during National Food Safety Education Month

Washington, DC – It’s a question more than a few of us have faced. We snag a forgotten container of leftovers from the back of the refrigerator, stick our faces into it, and inhale deeply. “This smells fine, so is it safe to eat?”

September is National Food Safety Education Month, and the Texas AgriLife Extension Service is joining with the non-profit Partnership for Food Safety Education (PFSE) to introduce consumers to “Food Safety Mythbusters.”

Storing leftovers is the basis for one of this year’s four featured myths. The myths are presented with the facts consumers need to know to help reduce their risk of foodborne illness:

- **Myth:** Leftovers are safe to eat until they smell bad.
  
  **Fact:** Most people would not choose to eat spoiled, smelly food. However, if they did, they would not necessarily get sick. This is because there are different types of bacteria, some of which cause illness in people and others that don’t. The types of bacteria that do cause illness do not affect the taste, smell, or appearance of food. For this reason, it is important to freeze or toss refrigerated leftovers within 3-4 days. If you are unsure of how long your leftovers have been sitting in the refrigerator, don’t take the risk – when in doubt, throw it out!

- **Myth:** I use bleach and water to sanitize my countertops, and the more bleach I use the more bacteria I kill.
  
  **Fact:** There is no advantage to using more bleach. In fact, overuse of bleach can be harmful because it is not safe to consume. To create a sanitizing solution, it is recommended that you use 1 tablespoon of unscented liquid bleach per gallon of water. Flood the countertop with the solution; allow it to sit for a few minutes; then pat the countertop with clean, dry paper towels, or allow it to air dry. Any leftover sanitizing solution can be stored, tightly covered, for up to one week. After that, the bleach has lost its effectiveness.

- **Myth:** I don’t need to wash my produce if I am going to peel it.
  
  **Fact:** You should wash fresh fruits and vegetables under running tap water just before eating, cutting, or cooking. Harmful bacteria could be on the outside of the produce. If you peel or cut it without first washing it, the bacteria could be transferred to the part you eat. Wash delicate produce such as grapes or lettuce under cool, running water. Blot dry with a clean cloth towel or paper towel. Rub firm-skin fruits and vegetables under running tap water, or scrub them with a clean produce brush. Never use detergent or bleach to wash fresh fruits or vegetables. These products are not intended for consumption.
• **Myth:** The stand time recommended for microwaveable foods is optional; it’s just so you don’t burn yourself.

**Fact:** Stand time is not about cooling the microwaved food, but rather is an important part of the cooking process. Stand times are usually just a few minutes, and the time is necessary to bring the food to a safe internal temperature as measured with a food thermometer. To ensure safety with microwave cooking, always read and follow package instructions; know your microwave’s wattage; and use a food thermometer to ensure food has reached a safe internal temperature.

“Food safety is a high priority for the Texas AgriLife Extension Service,” said [name of agent]. “By participating in Mythbusters with the Partnership for Food Safety Education, we help remind people during Food Safety Education Month how to make food safety a priority at home. For more information on food safety, contact your local county Extension office at (insert phone number here), or visit [www.fightbac.org](http://www.fightbac.org).”