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How to practice food safety at home

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According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, food is one of the basic physiological needs to sustain a human being, thus highlighting the importance of food in a person's life.

With the current situation brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, people are doing what they can in order to stay safe and healthy. The same amount of precaution should be taken in making sure that our food is safe since it comes into [more than] close contact with different people.

“For now, there is no evidence that shows COVID-19 can be transmitted through food. However, preventing contamination in food can reduce foodborne illnesses and won't put our health entirely at risk,” said Melody Melo-Rijk, the project manager for World Wildlife Fund-Philippines' (WWF-PH) Sustainable Diner Project.

The project manager of WWF-PH, the Philippine branch of the international conservation organization, shared five steps on how to keep the food we eat clean and safe for consumption:

1. Practice personal hygiene at all times. Although this may seem simple and a usual process nowadays, it is important to keep practicing personal hygiene all the time to lessen the amount of bacteria or other contagions that could cling to a person.

Melo Rijk said that the two basic ways to practice personal hygiene is to wash hands frequently for at least 20 seconds, and also by taking a bath regularly in order to avoid transferring any dirt or foreign bodies onto food, as well as to other people.

2. Clean and sanitize. There is a difference between the two, according to Melo-Rijk, and one can't be done without the other.

“When you clean, you are removing any dirt or visible foreign bodies that are stuck to your body. In the meantime, sanitizing is removing the microorganisms present on a surface or room. If you clean but don't sanitize, you're still at risk because of the microorganisms. And if you sanitize but don't clean, your efforts will be for nothing since the dirt stuck to the surface will continue to contaminate your skin or food,” she said.

She added that in doing so, always make sure to use sanitizers and other items that are approved by the Philippine Food and Drug Authority (FDA).

3. Separate raw and cooked food. Raw food has more microorganisms as opposed to cooked food which has undergone a heat treatment through the process of cooking. To prevent microorganisms from the raw food to contaminate the cooked ones, use a clean, separate container or surface for each.

“Use a different knife or utensil when cooking because cross contamination is possible. Budget-wise, sanitize the utensils thoroughly and frequently instead,” Melo-Rijk said.

4. Cook and store food properly. The reason behind this is because of the climate in the Philippines. Temperature plays a role in helping microorganisms thrive in food. Usually, five to 60 degrees Celsius (or 40 to 135 degrees Fahrenheit).

“If food stays at room temperature for more than two hours, it should be reheated or placed in cold storage (especially if it will be consumed for later!) to inhibit the growth of microorganisms,” Melo-Rijk said.

5. Consume fresh food and clean water. Much like with the first step, this seems easy enough to do. Buying produce or food from trusted sources is always a good choice.

Prevent overstocking food as well because as time passes, the freshness of food also expires until it reaches a point where it won't be safe to consume anymore. Not only will this help ensure the freshness of food but it could also lessen the amount of food waste that households produce.

Melo-Rijk and WWF-PH highlighted these points in celebration of World Food Safety Day held last June 7. The event is geared toward drawing the public's attention and inspiring actions to prevent, detect, and manage foodborne risks that could greatly impact food security, human health, and the overall function of a community.

“Its main purpose is to highlight the efforts of the government and stakeholders in making sure that food safety is part of the achievement of food security, human health, sustainable development, market access, and agriculture development,” Melo-Rijk said.

World Wildlife Fund-Philippines shared these tips on food management and safety during the sixth installment of a series of webinars entitled “Panda Talks,” which can be found on the organization's [Facebook page](#).

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