

Safe Handling and Cooking of Pig Roasts

Pig roasts are a common method for cooking large volumes of meat, but this cooking style is associated with a number of food safety challenges. Following this food safety guideline can help operators prevent any potential foodborne illness from occurring in people who consume the meat.

Storing and Preparing

Food safety begins when the pig is picked up and ends when the last piece of pork is eaten or safely refrigerated. It is strongly recommended that you pick up your pig just before you are ready to cook it. Otherwise you will need a refrigeration unit large enough to keep the meat cold at or below 4°C (40°F) during storage prior to cooking.

Avoiding Cross-Contamination

When preparing the pig, it is important to keep it separate from other food items, such as vegetables for salads and fruits that will not be cooked. All equipment and surfaces that come into contact with raw meat must be cleaned and sanitized to prevent cross-contamination. This includes all coolers, sinks, cutting boards, knives, countertops, roasting pans or other equipment that come into contact with raw meat. Ensure that your probe thermometer is sanitized before and between uses.

Roasting the Pig

Your pig can take anywhere from 4 to 12 hours to cook depending on the size and roasting method. If you plan to stuff the cavity of your pig, keep in mind that the more you put inside, the longer it will take to cook and the more difficult it will be to bring it up to the necessary internal cooking temperature. Use a cooking thermometer that has a probe long enough to reach the center of the thickest part of your meat and check the temperature in several different parts of the meat, including near the bone. Every part of the pig must be at least 71°C (160°F). Some parts of the pig, such as the shoulders and hams, take longer to cook because they are thicker than other parts.

Keep in mind that pig roasts are often held outdoors and poor weather (i.e. rain or wind) can increase the amount of time needed for the meat to reach the proper cooking temperatures.

Serving and Handling Leftovers

Now that your pig is fully cooked, be sure to use clean dishes when transporting the pig from the heat source to the table. Carving the pig can take some time so be mindful of the 2 Hour Rule: to refrigerate hazardous food within 2 hours after cooking. Pack leftovers in shallow containers and refrigerate right away. Throw away leftovers that have been at room temperatures for more than 2 hours. When re-heating leftovers, be sure the internal temperature reaches the initial cooking temperature of 71°C (160°F) for at least 15 seconds.

General Food Safety Practices

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water after handling raw meat
- Purchase meat from a government inspected facility and store it separately and below other food in cold holding at 4°C (40°F) or below
- Ensure you have an accurate, working thermometer. Check the internal temperature of the cooked meat in several different areas (shoulder, legs, etc.), all temperatures must be above 71°C (160°F)
- Keep cold food at 4°C (40°F) or below in a refrigerator or under ice and keep hot food at 60°C (140°F) or above
- Do not cook for others if you are sick with vomiting or diarrhea