September is National Food Safety Month!

This September marks the 26th year celebrating National Food Safety Month. The initiative was started in 1994 to bring awareness to food safety issues.

The topic of food safety may not seem very interesting at first, and you may be wondering if you should be concerned about it anyway. The answer is yes! Food safety can be critically important for yourself and for anyone you share food with - including your family members, friends, and neighbors. Start your safe food journey at the grocery store and follow through all the way to serving and storing by using the tips below.

1. If you grocery shop, always put raw meat and seafood in plastic bags to avoid contamination. If you use a delivery service for groceries, there should be a place to request that your shopper does this for you.
2. When storing foods, make sure that all hot and cold items are refrigerated within 2 hours. If it's a hot day (over 90), food should be refrigerated within an hour.
3. Go through your fridge and cupboards to make sure your food is fresh. Many of the dates on food labels have different meanings – there is a link below to explain the meaning of each date. Make this a part of your routine and clean your fridge several times a month.
4. Cleanliness is key! Wash your hands before preparing food, always rinse fruits and vegetables (even the pre-washed varieties), and sanitize your countertops regularly.
5. Use a food thermometer to ensure your meats are cooked to the proper temperature. Use the guide below to help.

Type of Meat	Safe Internal Temperature
Chicken and other poultry	165
Ground beef, lamb, pork	160
All other beef, lamb, pork	145

There are many additional resources online for information on food safety. For specific information on individual topics, the following websites may help:

- For food recalls: www.foodsafety.gov
- To determine if food is still fresh and the best way to store it: https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/foodkeeper-app
- Explanation of dates on food labels: https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/food-labeling/food-product-dating/food-product-dating