

CUTTING BOARDS (PLASTIC VS. WOOD)



Which is better, wooden or plastic cutting boards? Consumers may choose either wood or a nonporous surface cutting board, including plastic. Research has shown that nonporous surfaces can be easier to clean and safer for cutting meat and poultry. Even though some wooden boards have antimicrobial qualities, it has been found that microorganisms can become trapped in these surfaces and are difficult to dislodge by rinsing. Once trapped, bacteria survive in a dormant stage for long periods of time. The next time the cutting board is used these bacteria can contaminate other foods, potentially causing food-borne illness. On the other hand, even though microorganisms can be found on plastic cutting boards, they were more easily washed off of these types of surfaces.

Current cutting board recommendations include:

1. Keep all cutting boards clean by washing with hot, soapy water and a brush after each use. Then rinse and air dry or pat with paper towels. Non-porous acrylic, plastic, glass, and solid wood boards can be washed in an automatic dishwasher.
2. Sanitize both wood and plastic cutting boards with a diluted chlorine bleach or vinegar solution consisting of one teaspoon of liquid chlorine bleach in one quart of water or a one to five dilution of vinegar. Flood the surface with a sanitizing solution and allow it to stand for several minutes, then rinse and air dry or pat dry with paper towels.
3. All plastic and wooden cutting boards wear out over time. Discard excessively worn cutting boards.
4. Use a separate cutting board and knives for raw foods that require cooking. For example, use one for meat, poultry or fish. Use a second one for cooked or ready-to-eat foods such as salads, vegetables or bread. This will prevent bacteria on a cutting board that is used for meat products from contaminating a food that requires no further cooking.

References

- United States Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service. Fact Sheets. Safe Food Handling: Cutting Boards and Food Safety. http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Cutting_Boards_and_Food_Safety/index.asp May 2006
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