Fired Up

Have you ever chomped on a raw potato? Bit into a piece of pink chicken? Drank a couple of raw eggs? If so, the results may have been something like: A. This is disgusting or B. Food Poisoning. We take for granted walking up to a stove, turning a knob and having a source of heat right at our fingertips. There once was a time when fire came from Mother Nature and people only ate the raw food they hunted or gathered. When you stop and think about it, fire was a real revolution.

Safety First

If you’re anything like my Dad, maybe you cut open every single piece of chicken because “WHAT if it’s undercooked and we get Salmonella and die?” Dramatics aside, the man has a point. Heat is one of our best defenses against pathogens in food. Dining Services’ mission is to make sure your food is cooked to the proper temperature; ensuring harmful microorganisms are killed to prevent the unpleasant effects of food borne illness.

Let’s Break It Down

Your digestive system works day and night to break down your meals, but it works a lot harder when dealing with raw ingredients. Cooking acts as a pre-digestion mechanism, breaking down starch and proteins before it ever hits your tongue. Better digestion means more energy is extracted from each bite!

Sear, Baby, Sear (Not burn for obvious reasons)

What we crave is a perfectly rendered piece of meat with beautifully crosshatched grill marks, a nice brown crust and a savory aroma wafting through the air. That browning, known as the Maillard reaction, draws out flavors in foods that aren’t possible in raw preparations. In a world without heat from fire, there would be no cooking and the dining hall would only be a salad bar. The variety we’re afforded is thanks to some talented chefs playing with fire.

It’s Getting Hot in Here

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Questions? Post on our Facebook (RU Healthy Dining Team), Twitter (@RUHDT), Instagram (@RU_HDT), Snapchat (RU_HDT) or e-mail us at peggyp@dining.edu. Our mission is to educate students about nutrition and encourage them to make healthier food and lifestyle choices. For more info, nutrient analysis and past newsletters, visit our web page at http://food.rutgers.edu.