Chop ‘Green,’ Chop Healthy!

Who would have thought that a choice as simple as a cutting board could have such an impact? But choosing a wood cutting board over plastic is not only a better environmental choice, but also a healthier choice for food preparation.

Plastic vs. Wood

It has been found that, over time, plastic cutting boards need to be replaced more frequently than wood cutting boards. Score marks in plastic boards act as havens for bacteria that cannot be removed easily through normal washing. Additionally, the edges of these cuts can curl up and become ragged, which leads to the possibility that small bits of plastic are getting into the food being prepared.

Sure, replacing a plastic cutting board doesn’t seem like a big deal, but consider the number of plastic cutting boards that would go into a landfill if millions of people each replace their cutting boards every few years. Then consider that these plastic cutting boards will take hundreds of years to break down (perhaps even longer!).

Wood Cutting Boards – Healthy and Green

From a hygiene point of view, wood is the way to go. The capillary action of dry wood sucks up bacteria, which die in the inhospitable environment. Wood boards are also self-healing to a degree, in that shallow score marks in the wood (where bacteria can gather) will close up over time.

Besides being easier on the landfill, wood cutting boards are a good use of resources. Often, they are made from the offcuts from milling operations, which would otherwise go to waste. Also, bamboo, a popular type of wood used for cutting boards, is a readily renewable resource.

Using a Wood Cutting Board

To help waterproof and seal your wood cutting board—which makes it easier to clean—you can use earth-friendly products such as beeswax or coconut oil. Sealing a board will also help prevent residual odors (from items such as onions) from tainting other foods. To disinfect a wooden board, use a 3% hydrogen peroxide solution or neat vinegar. Simply spray it on, and then wipe it off with a clean cloth.

As a food safety precaution, it is best to use separate cutting boards for meat, fruit and vegetables, dairy and poultry, regardless of what type of cutting board you use. This will help guard against cross-contamination.

Lyme Disease

With the warm weather comes an increased risk of Lyme disease. You can lower it by taking the following precautions:

- Learn where deer and ticks are most commonly found, and avoid those areas.
- Cover as much of your body as possible when working or playing in grassy or wooded areas.
- Use insect repellents that are effective against ticks.
- Take steps to control ticks on your property by clearing leaves, brush, tall grasses, woodpiles and stone fences.
- Check your pets for ticks after they’ve been outdoors. The ticks can fall off the animal and then bite and infect you.

To help prevent Lyme disease, it’s important to check your skin after you’ve been outdoors in an area that may have ticks. If you find a tick on your skin, remove it carefully with tweezers. If you can’t remove the tick yourself, ask your doctor to remove it for you.

Some ticks are so small they can’t always be spotted easily. See your doctor for treatment if you’ve been in an area where you may have been bitten by a tick and develop symptoms such as a circular red rash or flu-like symptoms.

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