

## How to Shop Safer at the Grocery Store

The COVID pandemic has taught us all to take greater precautions when we shop. But airborne viruses are not the only danger. The CDC estimates that each year roughly 1 in 6 Americans (or 48 million people) gets sick, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die of food-borne diseases. You can reduce the risk of getting sick by following a few easy tips when making your next trip to the grocery store.

In a *Consumer Reports* article Chief Scientific Officer, James Dickerson, PhD offered some tips for making your next trip to the grocery store safer:

### Clean Your Resuable Bags

While replacing paper or plastic bags with cloth tote bags is better for

the environment, they can become contaminated with bacteria (like e-coli) or mold which build up over time. "To prevent this from happening," Dr. Dickerson advises, "periodically wash your reuseable bags. If they can't be tossed in with a load of laundry, use soap and hot water and rinse thoroughly. Let them dry completely before using them again."

### Disinfect the Cart

When you get to your store look for a dispenser of disinfecting wipes. Most stores have them next to where you pick up your shopping cart (and if they don't find a new place to shop). Wipe the cart's handle, seat, and anywhere else you might touch. This is the best way to get rid of any stray bacteria that might be sticking to the cart handle, Dickerson says.

### Shop in the Right Order

A game plan will make for a safer trip through the store. "Plan your route through the grocery store that you are shopping for your items in the reverse order of how fast they will spoil." Dry goods—like dried pasta, rice, and flour—that have shelf lives measured in weeks, months, or even years are usually found in the center aisles, so go there first. After combing those shelves head to the fresh foods and produce sections followed by the frozen foods section. "Finally, save items like raw meat and fish including cuts you get from the butcher for the last stop." Not only will this offer protection



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against food-borne illnesses, it will also help insure the freshness of your food.

### Handle Produce with Care

Dr. Dickerson recommends "[b]efore placing wet produce in a plastic bag, give it a little shake. In the store, the water helps keep produce fresh. But once it's in the bag in your fridge, excess water can speed up spoilage. Try to store your produce in the top seat area of your cart, rather than the cart's main compartment to help protect it from being jostled [in the cart] by other heavy items like boxes and cans. The bruising from this can shorten the shelf life of produce."

### Protect Against Contamination

We all know that meat products need to be thoroughly cooked to prevent food poisoning. But in the store, packages of fresh meat, poultry, and fish which may leak juices can be sources of contamination. To protect your family, "use an inside out produce bag to pick



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Safer Shopping...cont.

them up and then turn it rightside-out around the item. This adds a layer of protection between you and any contaminants on the package. Plus, it protects other foods in your cart from cross-contamination."

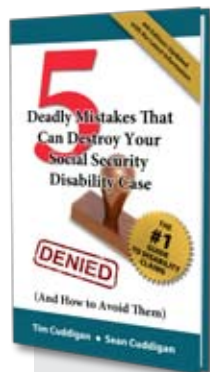
### Bring at least one insulated shopping bag plus cool packs to use for your fresh meat and fish

#### Keep Perishable Items Cool

It is also advisable to keep fresh meat, poultry, and fish from warming up once you take it out of the store's coolers. "Bring at least one insulated shopping bag plus cool packs to use for your fresh meat and fish. This will allow you to keep [them] at a safe temperature until you can get them home and into your fridge," advises Dr. Dickerson.

If you have other errands to run, try to do those first and make grocery shopping your last stop. Keep perishable foods out of hot trunk in the summer. Once you are done shopping take your groceries home immediately and store them right away

Although it is something we typically don't give a lot of thought to, smart food shopping is the first step in providing safe and healthy foods for our families.



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### Veterans Can Receive Free Access to National Mentoring Program

National nonprofit American Corporate Partners (ACP) works with post-9/11 veterans to help them find meaningful employment after military service. ACP Mentor helps veterans find great jobs—and the right jobs for them.

All industries and career paths are represented and veterans can explore career opportunities, learn about job search tips and tricks, gain resume and interviewing skills, and get connected directly to employers who are hiring. Since 2010, more than 22,000 veterans have already found success through ACP. More than 1,300 partner companies—including some of America's largest corporations—have hired veterans through this program.

It is easy to get paired with a mentor. Visit <https://www.acp-usa.org/> and fill out a brief application. ACP will reach out within 24 hours and schedule a 15-minute phone call to ask a few more clarifying questions in order to match the veteran with the right mentor. ACP will introduce the veteran to a mentor within several weeks of their application to the program, and will check in throughout the year to provide customized resources and ensure positive outcomes. Ninety-eight percent of veterans would recommend ACP.

All post-9/11 veterans who have served at least 180 days of active duty since 9/11 are eligible.



### Comfort Food

From the kitchen of Janet Cuddigan

#### Apple Tartlets with Apricot Topping

A treat or a dessert—you decide. Either way this is a delicious way to get your apple a day.

1 (17.5 ounce) package frozen puff pastry, thawed  
6 red apples, thinly sliced  
½ cup lemonade  
12 pats unsalted butter  
½ cup superfine sugar  
½ cup apricot preserves  
1 pinch coarse sugar crystals, or as needed

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Cut puff pastry into 12 equally-sized squares and arrange on a baking sheet. Dip apple slices in lemonade and place diagonally onto each puff pastry square; top each with 1 pat butter. Sprinkle superfine sugar over each square. Bake in the preheated oven until tartlet edges are golden, about 12 minutes. Bring apricot jam to boil a saucepan; cook and stir until jam is thinned, 1 to 2 minutes. Brush jam onto warm tartlets; sprinkle each with sugar crystals.

Adapted from [allrecipes.com](http://allrecipes.com)

### Best Phone Apps of 2022: 5 to Consider

(All apps listed in this article are free and have IOS and Android versions. As reminder, to avoid cyber mischief like malware, only download apps from reputable sources like Apple's App Store, Google Play or the Microsoft Store.)



#### Best App for Story Lovers: Yarn

Tired of Candy Crush and other video games? Yarn features a large library of stories—including mystery, romance, comedy, sci-fi, fantasy, and others—in text format. It is updated daily. The basic app is free but you can upgrade to a larger library with a subscription plan. (Some stories may not be suitable for younger readers.)

#### Best App for Podcast Lovers: Pocket Casts

If you prefer to listen to a story rather than read it, Pocket Casts may be the app for you. *Lifewire.com* says "[You can] Browse podcasts by charts, networks, and categories, then add the ones you like to play episodes on the fly and create your own playback queue. The app constantly checks for new episodes, so you always have access to the latest from your favorite shows, with automatic downloading and filters to keep them organized."

#### Best App for Non-Handy Homeowners: Angi

Formerly known as Angie's List, Angi connects people with local contractors and home services such as plumbing, landscaping, and electrical work. The app is free and you can get free quotes, but it is worth noting that Angi charges contractors every time they bid a home repair project.

#### Best App for Getting Out There: The National Park Service App

With information on more than 400 national parks, you can even use the new National Park Service app offline if you are in area with no cell phone service. You can also reserve some campsites through the Park Service app.



#### Best App for Avoiding "Time Sponges"

If you want a way to help you spend less time with your phone check out Forest. You set the number of minutes you want to focus on something besides your phone, and, according to *mashable.com*, "Forest will lock your phone screen while a virtual tree grows in your app. When the tree grows to completion you can use your device again, and you'll earn coins that you can save and use to plant real trees in Africa, thanks to a partnership with the nonprofit *Trees for the Future*."

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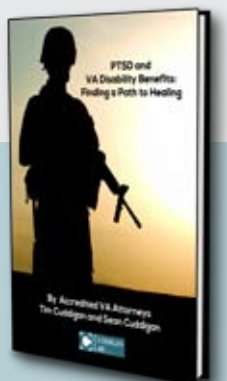
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