



Barbecue and Picnic Food Safety

Warmer weather may be ideal for outdoor picnics and barbecues, but it also provides a perfect environment for bacteria and other germs to multiply in food and cause foodborne illness. Extra precaution needs to be taken for meat, poultry, seafood, and egg products.

Wash Hands to Prevent Illness

- Wash hands with soap and water before and after preparing food, especially raw meats.
- Everyone should wash hands before eating to prevent passing germs to food.
- If you don't have running water at a picnic or campsite, set up a make-shift hand wash station using a water container with a spigot and wash with hand soap.
- As a last resort, waterless hand sanitizers or disposable hand wipes can be used.

Cooking Meats

- Marinate foods in the refrigerator, not on the counter or outdoors. Don't use the uncooked sauce that was used to marinate raw meat or poultry on cooked food. If you do want to use the leftover sauce, heat it until it comes to boil.
- Clean the grill and preheat coals until they are lightly coated with ash.
- Thaw frozen meat before grilling so it cooks evenly. Use the refrigerator for slow, safe thawing or thaw sealed packages in cold water. You can use the microwave, oven, or stove to thaw or partially cook the meat if it then goes immediately on the grill.
- Cook the meat to a safe internal temperature. Use a food thermometer to be sure. Place the food thermometer in the thickest part of the meat, avoiding bone, fat, or cartilage.
 - Ground beef, pork, and hamburger patties: 160 degrees F.
 - Whole or ground chicken or other poultry: 165 degrees F.
 - Hot dogs, sausages: 165 degrees F.
 - Whole cuts (such as steaks, chops, ribs) of beef, pork, veal, and lamb: 145 degrees. Allow the meat to "rest" for 3 minutes before cutting or eating.
 - Fish: 145 degrees F.
 - Shrimp, lobster, and crabs: Meat should be pearly and opaque.
 - Clams, oysters, and mussels: Until the shells are open.
- Never place cooked food on a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, seafood, or eggs. Be sure to have plenty of clean utensils and platters to avoid cross-contamination.

Fruits, Vegetables, and Salads

- Wash fruits and vegetables with running water before cooking or serving. Rub or scrub

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firm-skin fruits and vegetables, such as melons, under running water. Bacteria and other germs can be transferred to the inside of the fruit or vegetable by cutting through it.

- Packaged fruits and vegetables labeled "ready to eat" or "washed" don't need to be washed.
- Pasta and potato salads should be kept cold until serving. Contrary to common thought, mayonnaise is not the potential problem with these salads. These salad's other ingredients, such as potatoes, eggs, pasta, and tuna, are better at producing harmful bacteria, so they need to be chilled before combining to make the salad.
- Cut fruits, vegetables, and prepared salads should be kept cold. When served outdoors, consider placing the serving dish on ice or store in a cooler after serving.
- Remember – keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold.

Traveling with Food

- Bring only the amount of food you think you'll use. Consider taking non-perishable foods and snacks that don't need to be kept refrigerated.
- Use an insulated cooler with plenty of ice or freezer packs placed around and on top of the food to keep it at 40 degrees F or below.
- Keep raw meat and poultry from contaminating cooked foods, or foods meant to be eaten raw such as fruits. Place raw meat and poultry in sealed containers or wrapped in plastic bags to prevent juices from getting on other foods.
- Fill the cooler up. A full cooler will maintain its cold temperatures longer than one that is partially filled.
- Keep drinks in a separate cooler from the food. The beverage cooler will be opened frequently while the food cooler stays cold.
- If possible, transport the cooler in the air-conditioned part of your car, rather than in a hot trunk. Keep the cooler out of direct sunlight while traveling or at the picnic.

Leftovers - Don't Let Food Sit Out

- Don't let food sit out for more than two hours. On a hot day (90 degrees or higher), don't let food sit out for more than one hour. Bacteria can multiply quickly on food left out in warm weather.
- Store leftovers in a refrigerator or in a cooler with plenty of ice or frozen packs. Leftover meat, poultry, seafood, and egg products should be the first foods you want to keep cold. Salads and cut or cooked fruits and vegetables should be kept cold.
- Throw away perishable food that has been sitting out too long. If the ice or gel packs in the cooler have melted, and you can't keep the food cold. When in doubt throw it out.
- Some foods such as breads, rolls, chips, crackers, and cookies are okay to leave out but

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should be covered for freshness. Condiments such as ketchup, mayonnaise, and mustard are acidic, so they are okay to leave out for a picnic or barbecue.

Clean-up Properly

- Wash utensils, plates, and food preparation surfaces with hot soapy water, then rinse. Don't reuse plates or utensils that came into contact with raw meats until they are cleaned.
- If away from home, pack up dirty dishes to clean at home. Bring a separate box or plastic bag to hold dishes that held raw meats.
- If camping or away from home for a longer period of time, bring some water and cleaning supplies with you to wash dishes for reuse.
- Clean the grill and place trash in covered garbage and recycle bins to prevent attracting yellow jackets, rodents, or other wildlife.

Resources with additional information:

- USDA's website on safe food handling:
www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Barbecue_Food_Safety/index.asp