

Who doesn't enjoy a barbecue or picnic on a beautiful summer day? Warmer temperatures and beautiful weather usually mean more outdoor gatherings with family and friends. It also presents opportunities for uninvited guests – foodborne bacteria – to thrive. Foodborne illness increases dramatically during the summer months. Improper food storage and handling can cause bacteria to flourish and make everyone sick.

To protect everyone in your party from foodborne illness, safe food handling and preparation when cooking and eating outdoors is critical. Keep unwanted bacteria out of your next outdoor gathering by following these simple food safety tips.

### **PACKING AND TRANSPORTING FOOD**

- Keep cold food at the appropriate temperature. Cold food should be kept at or below 40 degrees Fahrenheit to prevent bacteria growth. Place cold food in a cooler with ice or frozen gel packs. Wait to pack cooler until you're ready to leave home.
- Organize your cooler contents and don't cross contaminate. Consider packing a separate cooler for beverages since it may be opened more frequently. Be sure to keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood securely wrapped to keep their juices from contaminating already prepared foods and foods that will be eaten raw.
- If possible, transport your cooler in the back seat of your air conditioned car instead of the hot trunk.
- Keep your cooler closed as much as possible. Limit the amount of times you open the cooler to help keep the contents at the appropriate temperature.

### **KEEPING ENVIRONMENT CLEAN**

- If there is no running water available, be sure to bring disposable moist towelettes or soap and water for hand washing and surface cleaning.
- Be sure to have extra clean utensils and platters.



# Food Safety

### **FOOD PREPARATION**

- Thaw food safely. Completely thaw meat and poultry before grilling so it cooks evenly. Thaw meat in the refrigerator. Never thaw meat at room temperature or outdoors. Remember that bacteria grow rapidly in the temperature danger zone of 41 to 140 degrees F.
- Marinate food safely. Foods should be marinated in the refrigerator. Do not leave on the kitchen counter or outdoors in the temperature danger zone. If you plan to use the marinade as a sauce on cooked food, reserve a portion before placing raw meats in it. You may use the marinade for basting while grilling; however, do not reuse marinade after grilling.
- Cook food thoroughly. Meat and poultry often brown quickly on the outside. Always use a food thermometer to ensure food is cooked to the appropriate internal temperature. (poultry – 165 degrees F, ground beef – 160 degrees F, pork – 160 degrees F, steaks – 145 degrees F for medium rare and 160 degrees F for medium).
- Keep hot food at 140 degrees F or warmer until ready to serve. Move cooked food to the side of the grill rack away from the coals to keep it hot but not overcooked.

### **SERVING FOOD**

- Do not reuse platters or utensils. When taking food off of the grill, use a clean platter and utensils. Using platters and utensils that previously held raw meat or poultry allows bacteria from the raw food's juices to spread to the cooked food.
- Cold perishable food should be stored in the cooler at 40 degrees F or less until time to serve.
- Hot food should be kept hot, at or above 140 degrees F until time to serve.
- Never let your food remain in the temperature danger zone for more than 2 hours, or 1 hour if the outdoor temperature is above 90 degrees F. Discard any food that has been left out longer to be safe.

By following these simple food safety tips, you can limit your guests to the ones you invite and make your next outdoor gathering a fun and safe event for everyone on your list.

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