



Food Safety Associated with Cook-outs and Picnics

Introduction

Warm temperatures increase the risk for food-borne illness which can spoil cook-outs and picnics.

By taking the appropriate precautions you can do your part to help assure the food you serve is safe to eat.

The Time and Temperature Relationship

Perishable foods (e.g., milk, dairy products, eggs, beef, pork, poultry, fish, seafood, other moist high protein foods, or dishes containing these ingredients) should be kept cold (at or below 41°F) or hot (at or above 140°F).

Danger Zone

The “danger zone” is the temperature at which most bacteria grow fast (41°F to 140°F).

- When the outdoor or surrounding temperature is less than 90°F, perishable foods should not be left out for more than two hours.
- When the outdoor or surrounding temperature is more than 90°F, perishable foods should not be left out for more than one hour.

Transportation

Prepare food as close to the time you’re leaving as possible.

When traveling, keep all perishable food in an iced cooler or use freeze-pack inserts until cooking or serving time. Fill cooler with 25% ice or freeze-packs and 75% food.

Raw foods should be tightly packaged so that juices don’t leak on other foods in the cooler.

Keep your cooler in the air-conditioned car — not in your trunk.

If traveling long distances, consider buying perishable foods at or near the end of your trip.



Food Preparation

Wash your hands with soap and hot water before and after preparing food. If running water is unavailable use disposable hand-wipes to clean hands.

THAWING

Acceptable methods for thawing are:

- In the refrigerator at 41°F or less.
- Under cold water, change water every 30 minutes or use running water.

4/03

AZ9713

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND LIFE SCIENCES
TUCSON, ARIZONA 85721

Ralph Meer, Ph. D., R.D.
Instructional Specialist, Food Safety

Scottie Misner, Ph.D., R.D.
Associate Nutrition Specialist
Department of Nutritional Sciences

This information has been reviewed by university faculty.

cals.arizona.edu/pubs/health/az9713.pdf

- As part of the cooking process.
- In a microwave oven (cook immediately after thawing).

Don't put cooked items on cutting boards or plates that were used to prepare or carry raw items to your grill.

Cover marinating meat, poultry, and fish/seafood. Marinate in the refrigerator, not at room temperature. Reserve a portion of the unused marinade for basting cooked foods.

Cooking

Precooking of meat and poultry is OK if grilled immediately afterward.

Allow 30 minutes for charcoal to heat before adding food.

It is best to use a meat thermometer to assess doneness. Calibrate thermometer in slushy ice to 32°F. Cook ground meat and poultry to 160–165°F (internal temperature). Steaks or chops (beef, veal or lamb) should be cooked to 145°F. Cook all cuts of pork to 160°F. Cook whole poultry or poultry parts to 165°F for safety and 170–180°F for optimum quality.

Cook the amount of food required for immediate consumption only, leaving the remainder in the cooler.

Leftovers

Avoid preparing excess amounts of food so you don't have to worry about leftovers.

If you expect to have leftovers, plan ahead. Divide leftover food into small shallow containers for fast cooling. Refrigerate or return leftovers to cooler as soon as possible and do not exceed previously indicated time/temperature recommendations.

For the trip home, leftovers should be put back in the cooler and kept at 41°F or less.

When in doubt, throw it out!!

Other things to consider

- Keep your cooler in the shade.
- Consider using separate coolers for beverages and perishable foods to avoid temperature changes associated with frequent opening and shutting of coolers.
- Use squeeze bottles or packaged condiments instead of jars with spoons or knives.

For other questions on Food Safety and Sanitation, call your local county Cooperative Extension office.

References

Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), USDA. Summer food handling. October 1996.

Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), USDA. Barbecue food safety. December 1996.

Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), USDA. A consumer guide to safe handling and preparation of ground meat and poultry.

Any products, services, or organizations that are mentioned, shown, or indirectly implied in this publication do not imply endorsement by The University of Arizona.