

Keep Food Safe at Community Dinners and Potlucks

Safe food handling is important, especially when groups of people are fed at community events. Temperature control is a critical issue for volunteer food handlers. Keep food safe when preparing and serving food to large groups.

Leading Causes of Foodborne Illness

- Failure to cool food properly
- Food not hot enough
- Infected food handler
- Preparation too far ahead of serving time
- Raw food mixed with cooked food
- Food left in the DANGER ZONE (41 to 135 F) too long
- Cross-contamination

Foods Linked to Foodborne Illness

Many foods can support the growth of microorganisms that may cause foodborne illness. Potentially hazardous foods such as meat, poultry, seafood, fish and eggs are moist and contain protein, which provide good conditions for bacterial growth. Other potentially hazardous foods include cooked rice, alfalfa sprouts, melons, and baked and boiled potatoes.

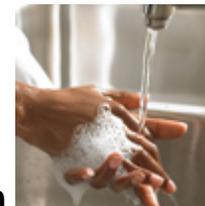
Keep Food Safe at Community Dinners

- Select a person who is familiar with food service sanitation to be in charge. Hold a short training session for volunteers.
- Whenever possible prepare food in a kitchen specifically designed for quantity food production.
- Plan ahead! Make sure the location meets your needs. Does it have adequate storage space in the refrigerator and freezer? Does it have the cooking and hot-holding equipment you need?
- Obtain food from inspected/approved sources.
- Store and prepare food safely. Refrigerate or freeze potentially hazardous foods in shallow containers within two hours of shopping or preparing.
- Prepare and cook food safely.

- Always work with clean hands.
- Cook food to the recommended safe internal temperature.
- Never partially cook food for finishing later because you increase the risk of bacterial growth.
- For best quality and safety, prepare foods close to serving time.
- Refrigerate ingredients for salads before mixing them together.

Keep Food Safe During Preparation

Remember these four steps to food safety:



Clean

- Wash hands and surfaces that come into contact with food.



Separate

- Don't cross-contaminate! Keep raw meat away from ready-to-eat foods such as lettuce, melons and bread.
- Wash cutting boards after use.

Cook

- Cook food to the recommended internal temperature. Measure temperatures with a clean, calibrated food thermometer.
- Don't cook food partially for finishing later because that increases the risk of bacterial growth.
- Keep time between cooking and serving to a minimum; preferably prepare food within several hours of the event.

Category	Food	Temperature (°F)
Ground Meat & Meat Mixtures	Beef, Pork, Veal, Lamb	160
	Turkey, Chicken	165
Fresh Beef, Veal, Lamb	Steaks, roasts, chops	145
Poultry	Chicken, Turkey, Duck & Goose	165
Pork and Ham	Fresh pork & Ham (Raw)	145
	Precooked ham (to reheat)	140
Eggs & Egg Dishes	Eggs	Cook until yolk and white are firm
	Egg dishes	160
Leftovers & Casseroles	Leftovers	165
	Casseroles	165

Category	Food	Temperature (°F)
Seafood	Fin Fish	145 or cook until flesh is opaque and separates easily with a fork.
	Shrimp, lobster, and crabs	Cook until flesh is pearly and opaque.
	Clams, oysters, and mussels	Cook until shells open during cooking.
	Scallops	Cook until flesh is milky white or opaque and firm.

Chill

- Refrigerate perishable foods promptly in shallow containers. Thick foods such as stew should be no more than 2 inches deep; thinner foods such as soup should be no more than 3 inches deep.
- Keep refrigerators at 40 F or lower.

Keep Food Safe When Transporting

When bringing food to a potluck, keep these tips in mind:

- **Keep cold foods cold.** Keep food at or below 41 F. Place in a cooler with a cold source, such as ice.
- **Keep hot foods hot.** Use insulated containers for hot items such as stews and chili. Pack right before you leave and don't open them until serving time.

- Tightly seal and wrap foods.
 - Do not transport food with animals.
- Note: If you won't be able to keep food adequately hot or cold, serve items such as dried fruit, nuts, peanut butter sandwiches, apples and bananas.

Keep Food Safe When Serving

- Use clean dishes and utensils to serve. "Germs" can survive and grow in food left on utensils.
- Keep serving portions small when you are not sure how quickly the food will be eaten.
- Replace empty platters with freshly filled ones. Don't add new food to a serving dish that already contained food.
- Discard any food left out at room temperature for more than two hours.



Keep Hot Foods Hot

- Hold cooked or reheated food above 135 F; place in hot holding equipment, such as chafing dishes, crock pots and warming trays.
- Reheat previously prepared food to 165 F, using a stove, oven or microwave oven.
- Check temperatures frequently!

Keep Cold Foods Cold

- Place *cold* food in containers on ice.
- Hold *cold* foods at or below 41 F.