

News Release  
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## **Picnic Food Safety**

As the summer temperatures rise, safe food handling when eating outdoors becomes even more critical. As food heats up in summer temperatures the bacteria multiplies rapidly. Here are some simple food safety guidelines for transporting your food and serving it safely once you've arrived at the picnic spot.

Keeping food at proper temperatures is critical to preventing the growth of foodborne bacteria. The key is to never let your picnic food remain in the "Danger Zone" — between 40° F and 140° F — for more than 2 hours, or 1 hour if outdoor temperatures are above 90° F. This is when bacteria in food can multiply rapidly, and lead to foodborne illness.

Cold perishable food should be kept in the cooler at 40°F or below until serving time. Place cold food in a cooler with ice or frozen gel packs. Pack beverages in one cooler and perishable food in another. That way, as picnickers open and reopen the beverage cooler to replenish their drinks, the perishable foods won't be exposed to warm outdoor air temperatures. Foods in individual serving dishes can be placed directly on ice, or in a shallow container set in a deep pan filled with ice. Drain off water as ice melts and replace ice frequently. Once you've served it, food should not sit out for longer than 2 hours, or 1 hour if the outdoor temperature is above 90°F. If it does - discard it.

Hot food should be kept hot, at or above 140°F. Hot food should be wrapped well and placed in an insulated container until serving. Grilled food can be kept hot until served by moving it to the side of the grill rack, just away from the coals. This keeps it hot but prevents overcooking.

Don't forget to pack your food thermometer. Always use it to be sure your food is cooked thoroughly.

When serving, never re-use a plate or utensils that previously held raw meat, poultry, or seafood for serving — unless they've been washed first in hot, soapy water. Otherwise, you can spread bacteria from the raw juices to your cooked or ready-to-eat food. In storage, be sure to keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood securely wrapped. This keeps their juices from contaminating prepared/cooked foods or foods that will be eaten raw, such as fruits and vegetables.

If you don't have access to running water, simply use a water jug, some soap, and paper towels. Or, use moist disposable towelettes for cleaning your hands. If you desire, follow this with a hand sanitizer but not instead of cleaning your hands.

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