



Picnic Time

Food Safety

The CDC estimates that 76 million people suffer from food poisoning. Summer time is full of picnics, and picnics bring food out into the open where it can stay warm too long.

Avoid an outbreak of food poisoning this summer by following simple guidelines about food safety and food handling.



Cooking outdoors no matter what time of the year, more and more people are cooking outdoors. But outdoor cooking during the summer seems to pose a few extra challenges - leaving food out for just a short period of time under the hot sun can result in harmful bacteria rapidly multiplying and it increases the chance of getting foodborne illness. Here are some basic guidelines for safe food handling during the hot summer months.

From Store to Home

- * Purchase refrigerated or frozen items after you have selected all your non-perishables.
- * Put raw meat/poultry in a plastic bag so juices won't cross-contaminate your fruits or vegetables.
- * Immediately refrigerate all perishable items when you get home.
- * Completely defrost meat/poultry, so that it cooks more evenly and doesn't leave raw or poorly cooked places.
- * When transporting food to another location, whether on a long family trip or just a short distance to the park, it is important to keep it cold to minimize bacterial growth.
- * Keep meats refrigerated until ready to use.
- * Pack perishable food from the refrigerator to the cooler just before leaving and keep on ice until ready to use.
- * Keep cooler out of direct sunlight and avoid opening it too often.

Hint: Pack beverages in one cooler and foods in another.



Keep it Clean!

Whether preparing food in your kitchen for the backyard grill or putting it all together at the campground, be sure to keep food surfaces clean. And with so many "cooks in the kitchen", or at the grill, make sure to have plenty of clean utensils and platters on hand.

To prevent foodborne illness, don't use the same utensils or platters for raw and cooked meats. If you are headed to the park or campgrounds, find out if there is a source of clean water. If not, bring water for preparing and cleaning. Or pack both dry and wet clothes for cleaning surfaces and hands.

Finally, to make the most of your summer picnics:

Be Active. Enjoy the fresh air. Being outdoors is a great chance to include some exercise and burn some calories. Take a hike, toss a Frisbee or football, play baseball, canoe, or plan a fun game for the whole gang.