



# FOOD FACTS

From the U.S. Food and Drug Administration

## Eating Outdoors

### Handling Food Safely

*Picnic and barbecue season offers lots of opportunities for outdoor fun with family and friends. But these warm weather events also present opportunities for foodborne bacteria to thrive. As food heats up in summer temperatures, bacteria multiply rapidly.*

*To protect yourself, your family, and friends from foodborne illness during warm-weather months, safe food handling when eating outdoors is critical. Read on for simple food safety guidelines for transporting your food to the picnic site, and preparing and serving it safely once you've arrived.*



### Pack and Transport Food Safely

*Keep your food safe: from the refrigerator/freezer . . . all the way to the picnic table.*

- **Keep cold food cold.** Place cold food in a cooler with ice or frozen gel packs. Cold food should be stored at **40 °F or below** to prevent bacterial growth. Meat, poultry, and seafood may be packed while still frozen so that they stay colder longer.
- **Organize cooler contents.** Consider packing beverages in one cooler and perishable foods 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.
- **Keep coolers closed.** Once at the picnic site, limit the number of times the cooler is opened as much as you can. This helps to keep the contents cold longer.
- **Don't cross-contaminate.** 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.
- **Clean your produce.** Rinse **fresh fruits and vegetables** under running tap water before packing them in the cooler — including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten. Rub **firm-skinned fruits and vegetables** under running tap water or scrub with a clean vegetable brush while rinsing with running tap water. Dry fruits and vegetables with a clean cloth towel or paper towel.
  - Packaged fruits and vegetables that are labeled “ready-to-eat,” “washed,” or “triple washed” need not be washed.

#### Quick Tips for Picnic Site Prep

Food safety begins with proper hand cleaning — including in outdoor settings. Before you begin setting out your picnic feast, make sure hands *and* surfaces are clean.

- **Outdoor Hand Cleaning:** If you don't have access to running water, simply use a water jug, some soap, and paper towels. Or, consider using moist disposable towelettes for cleaning your hands.
- **Utensils and Serving Dishes:** Take care to keep all utensils and platters clean when preparing food.

## Follow Safe Grilling Tips

Grilling and picnicking often go hand-in-hand. And just as with cooking indoors, there are important guidelines that should be followed to ensure that your **grilled food** reaches the table **safely**.

- **Marinate safely.** Marinate foods in the refrigerator — *never* on the kitchen counter or outdoors. In addition, if you plan to use some of the marinade as a sauce on the cooked food, *reserve a portion separately* before adding the raw meat, poultry, or seafood. **Don't reuse marinade.**
- **Cook immediately after “partial cooking.”** If you partially cook food to reduce grilling time, do so *immediately before* the food goes on the hot grill.
- **Cook food thoroughly.** When it's time to cook the food, have your food thermometer ready. Always use it to be sure your food is cooked thoroughly. (See **Safe Food Temperature Chart** at right.)
- **Keep “ready” food hot.** 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 reuse platters or utensils.** Using the same platter or utensils that previously held raw meat, poultry, or seafood allows bacteria from the raw food's juices to spread to the cooked food. Instead, have a clean platter and utensils ready at grill-side to serve your food.

Safe Food Temperature Chart	
Steaks & Roasts	145 °F
Fish	145 °F
Pork	160 °F
Ground Beef	160 °F
Egg Dishes	160 °F
Chicken Breasts	165 °F
Whole Poultry	165 °F
Shrimp, Lobster, and Crabs	Cook until pearly and opaque
Clams, Oysters, and Mussels	Cook until the shells are open

### Platter Warning:



Prevent  
“Cross-Contamination”  
When Serving

*Never* reuse 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. This is particularly important to remember when serving cooked foods from the grill.

## Serving Picnic Food: Keep it **COLD/HOT**

Keeping food at proper temperatures — indoor and out — is critical in 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.

Instead, follow these simple rules for keeping **cold foods cold** and **hot foods hot**.

### COLD FOOD

Cold perishable food should be kept in the cooler at **40 °F** or below until serving time.

- Once you've served it, it 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.
- Foods like chicken salad and desserts 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.

### HOT FOOD

Hot food should be kept hot, at or above **140 °F**.

- Wrap it well and place it in an **insulated container** until serving.
- Just as with cold food — these foods should not sit out for more than 2 hours, or 1 hour in temperatures above 90 °F. If food is left out longer, throw it away to be safe.

*Everyone can practice safe food handling by following these four simple steps:*



Safety ■ Health ■ Science ■ Nutrition

September 2007