

Outdoor eating food safety tips from the Food and Drug Administration

The picnic and barbeque season traditionally begins on Memorial Day weekend. To protect yourself, your family, and friends from food borne illness, practice safe food handling techniques when eating outdoors. Keep these tips in mind when preparing, storing, and cooking food for picnics and barbecues.

Before you begin:

- Food safety begins with hand-washing even in outdoor settings. And it can be as simple as using a water jug, some soap, and paper towels.
- Consider using moist disposable towelettes for cleaning your hands.
- Keep all utensils and platters clean when preparing food.

When transporting food:

- Keep cold food cold. Place cold food in a cooler with ice or frozen gel packs. Cold food should be held at or below 40°F.
- Consider packing beverages in one cooler and perishable foods in another.
- Meat, poultry, and seafood may be packed while it is still frozen so that it stays colder longer. Be sure to keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood securely wrapped so their juices don't contaminate cooked foods or foods eaten raw such as fruits and vegetables. And don't forget to rinse raw fruits and vegetables in water before packing them.
- Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under running tap water, including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten. Packaged fruits and vegetables labeled "ready-to-eat," "washed," or "triple washed" need not be washed.
- Rub firm-skin 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. Keep the cooler in the air-conditioned passenger compartment of your car, rather than in a hot trunk. Limit the times the cooler is opened.

Safe grilling tips:

- Marinate foods in the refrigerator, not on the counter or outdoors. If some of the marinade is to be used as a sauce on the cooked food, reserve a portion separately before adding the raw meat, poultry, or seafood.
- Don't reuse marinade.
- Don't use the same platter and utensils that previously held raw meat or seafood to serve cooked meats and seafood.
- If you partially cook food in the microwave, oven, or stove to reduce grilling time, do so immediately before the food goes on the hot grill.

- When it's time to cook the food, cook it thoroughly. Use a food thermometer to be sure.
- Beef, veal, and lamb steaks and roasts-145°F for medium rare, 160°F for medium, and 170°F for well done.
- Ground pork and ground beef-160°F.
- Ground poultry-165°F.
- Poultry breasts-170°F.
- Whole poultry (take measurement in the thigh)-180°F.
- Finish-145°F or until the flesh is opaque and separates easily with a fork.
- Shrimp, lobster, and crabs-the meat should be pearly and opaque. Clams, oysters, and mussels-until the shells are open.
- Grilled food can be kept hot until served by moving it to the side of the grill rack, just away from the coals where it can overcook.

When you serve food:

- Keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot.
- Do not use a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, or seafood for anything else unless the plate has first been washed in hot, soapy water.
- Hot food should be kept hot, at or above 140 °F. Wrap well and place in an insulated container.
- Foods like chicken salad and desserts in individual serving dishes can also 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.
- Don't let perishable food sit out longer than 2 hours. Food should not sit out for more than 1 hour in temperatures above 90°F.