

Food Safety Checklist

For 4-H Potluck Suppers and Other Meals Provided No Charge

This guideline is intended to assist 4-H leaders and families see that projects go smoothly, safely and successfully for preparation and serving of food items to be shared with other people at 4-H functions. This is not for fund raising meals; therefore it is not food for sale.

Things to consider even before you prepare the food:

- ✘ Do NOT prepare food for other people if you are feeling sick; you could pass your illness on to them. It is best for you to supply only store bought goods to the meal if there is any danger of spreading your illness to others.
- ✘ Consider your menu based on:
 - ✘ Distance – How far will you be traveling with prepared food and do you have a means of keeping the hot food hot and the cold food cold?
 - ✘ Facilities – Is there refrigeration units, stoves and warm running water available?
 - ✘ Ingredients – Recipes should be carefully considered. There are a number of items such as pickles, relish, jams and jellies that are preserved with sugar, salt and vinegar that are safe to remain at room temperature, however there are a number of other foods that require special care when handling. Use of proper handling techniques are critical to protecting participants from food borne illness. Recipes calling for raw eggs should be avoided for potluck events.
 - ✘ Timing - Will the food be set out, served and eaten within a two-hour period?

Things to consider when preparing the food:

- ✘ Be sure to wash hands and fingernails thoroughly with soap and warm running water for a minimum of thirty seconds before preparing or serving the food.
- ✘ Avoid cross contamination. Raw meat, poultry and fish should be kept away from unwashed fruits and vegetables and ready to eat foods. Remember that counter tops, cutting boards, dishes and utensils that are not washed properly can contaminate food even when they look clean.
- ✘ Cook to proper temperatures. Use a thermometer to ensure that internal temperatures of cooked foods. Bring sauces, soups and gravy to a boil.
- ✘ Do not leave prepared food at room temperature. The recommendation is to cool cooked food quickly and refrigerate as soon as possible.

Things to consider when transporting the food to the event:

- Remember that safe food handling and **temperature control** keeps harmful bacteria from growing, therefore you must have an effective way to keep the cold foods cold and hot foods hot.
- Cold food** should be kept at **4° Celsius or 40° Fahrenheit or colder**. Bring all cold foods to the function in a cooler with lots of ice or a refrigeration unit to ensure that food is kept cold until serving time.
- Hot foods** must be kept piping hot at all times which means a temperature of **at least 60° Celsius or 140° Fahrenheit or hotter**. If you can't keep them above this minimum recommended temperature then food should be chilled and reheated thoroughly at the function.
- Foods must be thoroughly cooked at time of preparation – keep covered to protect from contamination.

Things to consider when serving the food at the event:

- Food should be consumed within 2 hours of being taken out of the refrigerator or oven and leftovers should NOT be kept at the conclusion of the event.
- If reheating is occurring at the event the food must be hot and steamy for serving. Just “warmed up” is not good enough. Use a thermometer to ensure the temperature is high enough, that temperature should be 74 °C or 165°F
- Acidic beverages such as fruit juices or punch must be prepared, stored, and served in containers made from food grade plastic, stainless steel or glass. Porcelain, enamelware or metals other than stainless steel should not be used.
- Utensils and empty serving bowls need to be removed, scraped, washed in hot soapy water, rinsed and immersed in hot water (at least 60° C / 140°F) that contains 5 ml of chlorine bleach per 750 ml of water before replenishing with a new or fresh batch of food.
- If food is being served or handled by the individuals they should be wearing plastic gloves.