

July: National Picnic Month

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Summer holidays provide a break from school and work, but we shouldn't break from being smart about food safety. More care is needed since foodborne illnesses increase during the summer. July is National Picnic month and summer picnics are a great way to enjoy the outdoors and each other's company. Keep your picnics with family and friends healthy and safe this summer by remembering the following tips.



Tips to stay food safety savvy on picnics:

Temperature and time. Keep your picnics safe this summer by remembering that the time perishable food can be left outside the refrigerator or freezer drops from two hours to one hour in temperatures above 90 degrees Fahrenheit (F). Keep hot food hot and cold food cold on the way to, and during your picnics and outdoor gatherings.



Use a food thermometer. According to USDA research, 1 out of every 4 hamburgers turns brown in the middle before it has reached a safe minimum internal temperature of 160 degrees F. The only way to be sure food is safely cooked is to use a food thermometer to measure the internal temperature before removing food from the heat source. For all whole cuts (steaks, roasts, and chops) of meat, including pork, beef, lamb and veal, cook to 145 degrees F and then allow for a 3 minute rest time before carving or consuming.



Bring non-perishable foods. Reduce the worry of keeping foods at certain temperatures by limiting the number of perishable foods. Try bringing baked potato chips or pretzels instead of potato salad; washed whole fruit, dried fruit, or fruit cups instead of a fruit salad; and other snacks such as trail mix, nuts, or sunflower seeds.

Two coolers are better than one. Bring two coolers to the gathering, one for perishable food and one for beverages. Keep perishable foods cool by transporting them in an insulated cooler kept cold with ice or frozen gel packs. Open as infrequently as possible. Store drinks in another cooler.



Keep it clean. Make sure you check ahead and find out if there's a source of safe drinking water at your destination. If not, bring water for preparation and cleaning; or pack clean, wet, disposable cloths or moist towelettes and paper towels for cleaning hands and surfaces.



Dangers of cross-contamination. Cross-contamination is the transfer of harmful bacteria to food from other foods, cutting boards, and utensils when they are not handled properly. It can happen during preparation, grilling, and serving food and is a prime cause of foodborne illness. Remember to wash your hands before and after handling food, and don't use the same platter and utensils for raw and cooked meat and poultry. Include lots of clean utensils, not only for eating but also for serving the safely cooked food.



Picnics are popular throughout the summer, and especially in July. One reason they are so popular is because many families take their vacations then and spend much of their time outdoors. The "road" to food safety can either be bumpy or smooth, depending on what precautions are taken handling meals. Check out www.food.unl.edu for more food, nutrition, and health information.



Plan a Picnic with Seasonal Produce!

Check out these simple and healthy picnic ideas:

- Pack a small cooler full of raw vegetables like carrots, celery, cucumbers, cherry tomatoes, and radishes. Bring along a healthy dip like hummus. Check out this super-duper easy hummus recipe at <https://food.unl.edu/fnh/hummus>.
- Use whole grain tortillas or whole wheat pita bread to make a wrap or pita pocket. Add veggies like spinach, shredded carrots, or chopped bell peppers. Here are some tasty ideas for quick wraps at <https://food.unl.edu/fnh/quick-wraps>.
- Try a salad that is new to your friends or family with ideas at <https://food.unl.edu/fnh/main-dish-salads>.
- Make a tasty, healthy, and quick olive oil salad dressing with this recipe at <https://food.unl.edu/fnh/olive-oil-dressing>.
- **Source:** <http://blogs.extension.iastate.edu/foodsavings/2014/05/27/plan-a-picnic-with-seasonal-produce/>.

Additional Resources & Links:

Grill it Safely. To enjoy your summer, here are some checkpoints for safe grilling the next time you fire up the grill.

<http://lancaster.unl.edu/food/grill-flyer.pdf>.

Eating Outdoors, Handling Food Safely. 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.

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm109899.htm>.

Food Safety while Hiking, Camping, & Boating.

Hiking, camping, and boating are good activities for active people and families. In many cases, these activities last all day and involve preparing at least one meal. If food is not handled correctly, foodborne illness can be an unwelcome souvenir.

<http://go.unl.edu/ihe3>.

Food Safety on the Move. Hitting the road for a picnic or cookout? If you're on the move with food, remember these food safety tips from fightback.org! <http://www.fightback.org/storage/food%20safety%20on%20the%20move.pdf>.

Sources:

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