

**SAFE FOOD EVENTS:  
FAIRS, FESTIVALS AND SUPPERS**

**FIVE STEPS  
TO  
FOOD SAFETY**



**Check out the following web sites for more food safety information;**

- [www.uri.edu/ce/ceec/foodsafety](http://www.uri.edu/ce/ceec/foodsafety)
- [www.canr.uconn.edu/ces/foodsafety](http://www.canr.uconn.edu/ces/foodsafety)
- [www.foodsafety.gov](http://www.foodsafety.gov)

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**Developed by: Cooperative Extension Food Safety Education Programs at the Universities of Connecticut, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont**

## Introduction

If you are preparing food at a local fair or festival, it is your responsibility to prepare and serve **safe** food. If a foodborne illness outbreak is traced to food served at your event, the consequences could be devastating for you and your organization. Cooking food for a large crowd can be very different from preparing a meal in your home kitchen.

This **Five-Step Guide** includes food safety practices that are “key” to preventing foodborne illness.

## Step 1- Plan for Food Safety

### Understand how foodborne illness occurs

Most foodborne illness is caused by eating food contaminated with microorganisms that can make you sick. Examples include **bacteria** such as *salmonella*, *listeria* or *e. coli*; **parasites**, sometimes found in raw meat or fish; or **viruses**, usually from contaminated water, a sick food worker, or dirty hands.

Harmful microorganisms may be found on raw meat, fish, poultry and unwashed vegetables or fruit. Ready-to-eat or cooked foods may be contaminated with microorganisms from dirty hands, plastic gloves, cooking equipment including utensils or counter tops and contaminated raw foods.

Bacteria, the most common cause of foodborne illness, contaminate and multiply on foods that are low in acid, high in starch or protein, and high in moisture. These foods are called **potentially hazardous** or **"risky"** foods.

#### Risky Foods:

Meat (hamburger, roasts, beef, pork, lamb, ham), poultry (chicken, turkey, duck), fish, shellfish, dairy products (milk, yogurt, soft cheeses, ice cream, butter), eggs, cooked vegetables, cooked cereals such as rice, macaroni or oatmeal, melon, sprouts, garlic in oil mixtures and foods made from these ingredients.

Anyone can get sick from a foodborne illness. However, certain groups of people are more likely to become ill and may suffer severe side effects. These groups include the very young, the elderly, people who are ill or recovering from a serious illness or who have a weakened immune system, and pregnant women.

### Keep the Menu Simple

Limit the number of risky foods and complicated menu items--with many ingredients and many preparation steps.

(1)

When planning, think about the facility. Is the facility equipped to prepare and serve the menu you have selected? Is the food preparation equipment in good working order? Is it designed to prepare and hold large volumes of food? Does the facility have:

- ✓ An adequate supply of potable (drinkable) water?
- ✓ Cleanable floors, walls, and ceilings (?)
- ✓ Adequate hot food storage equipment?
- ✓ Adequate refrigeration?
- ✓ Adequate food preparation and serving areas?
- ✓ Handwashing facilities?

### Buy Food From an Approved Source/Supplier

An approved supplier is licensed, regulated and/or inspected by a local, state or federal regulatory agency. Examples of approved sources include: licensed restaurants or caterers, supermarkets and wholesale suppliers. All meats and poultry must be USDA inspected.

Ice and water are considered foods. Ice must be made from water that is potable (drinkable) and come from an approved source/supplier--not from a home freezer.

### You can NOT serve:

- ✓ Foods prepared in a home kitchen
- ✓ Home canned foods (including jams, jellies and relishes)
- ✓ Wild game, fish or shellfish caught or killed by sport hunters or fishermen--all meat, game and fish must come from licensed vendors

## Step 2- Practice Good Personal Hygiene

When volunteers arrive at the event sick, do not wash their hands, or have dirty and/or artificial fingernails, they are a threat to the safety of the food being prepared and served.

### Personal Hygiene Guidelines:

- ✓ To prepare for work, take a shower, wash your hair, and put on clean clothes.
- ✓ Leave all jewelry at home, including piercing studs or rings. Even a simple wedding band can harbor bacteria.
- ✓ Never come to work sick. Workers with boils, sores, infected wounds, or who are vomiting or have a diarrhea should not work with food.
- ✓ Keep fingernails clean, unpolished and trimmed short. Long and/or artificial nails can hide bacteria or may chip or break and fall into the food.

- ✓ Always wash hands before starting to work and after coughing, sneezing, and blowing your nose.
- ✓ Always wear clean clothing, an apron, and some type of hair restraint (i.e. hat or hairnet); keep beards and mustaches trimmed short, or wear a beard net.

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### Step 3- Keep It Clean

#### Hands

- ✓ Make sure that your handwashing station is supplied with warm water, soap and single-use paper towels and a waste-water bucket.
- ✓ Before preparing any food, wash hands for at least 20 seconds using warm water and soap and rinse with warm water.
- ✓ Always wash hands **after** coughing, sneezing, blowing your nose, smoking, eating, touching any part of your body, touching raw foods, using cleaning chemicals or handling garbage during food preparation.
- ✓ Do not handle ready-to-eat foods (salads, fruit, sandwiches, donuts) with bare hands. Use utensils, deli paper or single-use plastic gloves.
- ✓ If using single use gloves remember that the purpose of gloves is to protect food from your hands (not to protect your hands from the food!). You need to change gloves just as often as you would wash your hands after coughing, sneezing, blowing your nose, smoking, eating, touching any part of your body, touching raw foods, using cleaning chemicals or handling garbage during food preparation. Wearing gloves is not a substitute for frequent handwashing.

#### Food Contact Surfaces: work areas, equipment, utensils, cutting boards

Good sanitation includes taking steps to insure that all food storage, preparation and serving areas are kept clean and sanitary. **Clean** means free of visible dirt or garbage. **Sanitary** means that the number of disease-causing microorganisms has been reduced to a "safe level". We often use a chlorine bleach solution at temporary events to sanitize utensils and work surfaces. You should always clean surfaces, equipment and utensils **BEFORE** sanitizing.

- ✓ Clean and sanitize all food contact surfaces and equipment at least every four hours. Also, clean and sanitize utensils and work surfaces each time there is change from working with raw to cooked or ready-to-eat foods.

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- ✓ Procedure for all food contact surfaces:
  - Wash in hot, soapy water.
  - Rinse in clean, hot water.
  - Sanitize by soaking in a hot water and bleach solution of 1 Tablespoon of bleach to 1 gallon of hot water. (Note: Do not use scented bleach!) . A test kit should be used to determine the strength of the solution. If unavailable, change the sanitizing solution whenever suds are gone from the wash water.
- ✓ Have a large supply of clean wiping cloths. When not in use, keep cloths in a chlorine bleach solution, which is **remade every four hours**. Make the solution with 1 gallon of water to 1 Tablespoon of chlorine bleach.
- ✓ Have an adequate supply of potable (drinkable) hot water for washing dishes, utensils and food preparation containers.
- ✓ Provide an adequate number of garbage cans with tight-fitting lids for waste disposal. They should be emptied when full and washed and sanitized at the end of each day.

### Step 4- Separate- Don't Contaminate:

Cross contamination occurs when a clean work surface or utensil or uncontaminated food comes into contact with a contaminated work surface, utensil or food. This can happen when raw meat, fish or poultry, eggs, or raw, unwashed vegetables are handled. It can also happen when utensils, cutting boards, containers or hands that have been used to prepare raw foods are not washed with soap and hot water before they are used to prepare ready-to-eat foods.

#### Guidelines for Preventing Cross Contamination

- ✓ Store raw meat, fish and poultry on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator to prevent their juices from dripping onto ready to eat foods.
- ✓ Clean and sanitize cutting surfaces and utensils after cutting up raw meat, fish or poultry. Wash hands thoroughly after handling raw foods.
- ✓ Prepare raw food away from ready-to-eat food.
- ✓ Use pasteurized eggs when a large number of eggs are being used. Never pool eggs (break a large amount of eggs together in a bowl for cooking later).

- ✓ Use individual packages of sugar, mustard, ketchup and other condiments or dispense them in a way the food can't become contaminated. (4)
- ✓ Store all food, utensils, and paper goods off of the ground or the floor.
- ✓ Protect foods from insects and other "critters" by keeping them covered at all times.

**Contamination may also happen when food comes into contact with metal, glass, dirt and other physical contaminants or chemical contaminants such as pesticides, cleaning chemicals and other chemicals.**

- ✓ Use only food grade containers/dishes to prepare and serve food. Never use copper, brass, gray enamelware containers or plastic garbage bags for food storage or service.
- ✓ Store pesticides, cleaning, and sanitizing chemicals in their original, labeled containers away from the food preparation area.
- ✓ Check to see if the can-opener leaves metal shavings in the food--you may need to replace it.
- ✓ When cleaning, protect food from dust, splash and cleaning/sanitizing chemicals.
- ✓ Do not use pesticides, including bug sprays, around food.
- ✓ Only use toothpicks with colored frilled tops

**Step 5- Keep Temperature Under Control**

Failure to keep risky foods at the proper temperatures is the number one cause of foodborne illness. Your equipment must be able to keep hot foods at 140° F or higher or cold foods at 41° F or below.

**Temperature Guidelines:**

- ✓ Keep a thermometer in your refrigerator or coolers to ensure they maintain a temperature of 41°F or below. Check refrigerators at the beginning and midway through the day. Check portable coolers every 4 hours. Keep records of the temperatures.
- ✓ All risky foods, including meats, poultry, eggs, shellfish and milk must arrive at the site at 41°F or below and be kept at 41°F or below until they are prepared and/or served.
- ✓ Use a thermometer to check the internal food temperatures when cooking or reheating foods. Temperatures are taken at the center of the

thickest part of the food. If recommended by the manufacturer, calibrate (or check to see if they are reading accurately) food thermometers daily.

- (5)
- ✓ Always completely cook food. Never partially cook foods in advance of the event.

**Safe Cooking Temperatures**

- Eggs, fish, meat, pork, commercial game animals.....145°F
- Ground fish, meat, game animals, injected meats.....155°F
- Poultry, stuffed meats, fish, pasta, poultry, stuffing.....165°F
- All foods must be reheated to .....165°F

- ✓ Food in a hot-holding unit must be held at 140° F or higher. Check the temperature of the food every four hours and record. If the temperature of the food drops below 140°F, the food must be reheated to 165° F and returned to the unit. Food may be reheated only once.
- ✓ **Never** use a hot holding unit to heat up raw or cold food--use only to hold hot food.
- ✓ The facilities at temporary food events may not be equipped to cool food safely. The food should arrive at the site already cool.
- ✓ If your event takes place in a facility with a kitchen with adequate refrigeration (*and your inspector allows it*), you may chill cooked foods from hot (140° F and above) to 70° F within 2 hours, then to 41° F within 4 additional hours. To chill, place the container of food in an ice bath (60% ice to 40% water) and frequently stir the cooling food; pour into a shallow (4 inches high) food-grade container, cover and refrigerate. Or, put the food into shallow food-grade containers to a depth of not more than 2 inches and place in the refrigerator, allowing for the air to circulate around the container. Cover when the food has reached 41° F.
- ✓ If hot or cold food is being transported to the site, it should be kept covered and carried in insulated coolers or hot-holding containers. Check and record the temperature of the food before it leaves the preparation kitchen and when it arrives at the site. Cold food should arrive at 41° F and hot food at 140° F.