



# KEEP FOOD SAFE at Community Dinners & Potlucks

Safe food handling is important, especially when groups of people are fed at community events. Temperature control is a critical issue for volunteer food handlers. Keep food safe when preparing and serving food to large groups.

## LEADING CAUSES OF **FOODBORNE ILLNESS**

- Failure to cool food properly
- Food not hot enough
- Infected food handler
- Preparation a day or more ahead of time
- Raw food mixed with cooked food
- Food left in the DANGER ZONE (41 to 140 F)
- Cross-contamination

## FOODS LINKED TO **FOODBORNE ILLNESS**

Many foods can support the growth of microorganisms that may cause foodborne illness. Potentially hazardous foods such as meat, poultry, seafood, fish and eggs are moist and contain protein, which provide good conditions for bacterial growth. Other potentially hazardous foods include cooked rice, alfalfa sprouts, melons, and baked and boiled potatoes.



## KEEP FOOD SAFE *DURING PREPARATION*

Remember these four steps to food safety:

### Clean

- Wash hands and surfaces that come into contact with food.

### Separate

- Don't cross-contaminate! Keep raw meat away from ready-to-eat foods such as lettuce, melons and bread.
- Wash cutting boards after use.

### Cook

- Cook food to the recommended internal temperature. Measure temperatures with a clean, calibrated food thermometer.
- Don't cook food partially for finishing later because that increases the risk of bacterial growth.
- Keep time between cooking and serving to a minimum; preferably prepare food within several hours of the event.

### Chill

- Refrigerate perishable foods promptly in shallow containers. Thick foods such as stew should be no more than 2 inches deep; thinner foods such as soup should be no more than 3 inches deep.
- Keep refrigerators at 40 F or lower.

## KEEP FOOD SAFE FROM *SOURCE TO SERVICE*

Controlling hazards from source to service is the key to safe food.

Your local health department or state agency can tell you what types of food can be served under both local and state ordinances.

Contact them with any questions you have regarding food offered to the public. It's their job to make sure food is served safely, not to shut down a community event!

## KEEP FOOD SAFE *AT COMMUNITY DINNERS*

- Select a person who is familiar with food service sanitation to be in charge. Hold a short training session for volunteers.
- Prepare food in a kitchen specifically designed for quantity food production.
- Plan ahead! Make sure the location meets your needs. Does it have adequate storage space in the refrigerator and freezer? Does it have the cooking and hot-holding equipment you need?
- Obtain food from inspected sources.
- Store and prepare food safely. Refrigerate or freeze potentially hazardous foods in shallow containers within two hours of shopping or preparing.
- Prepare and cook food safely.
- Always work with clean hands.
- Cook food to the recommended safe internal temperature.
- Never partially cook food for finishing later because you increase the risk of bacterial growth.
- For best quality and safety, prepare foods close to serving time.
- Refrigerate ingredients for salads before mixing them together.

## KEEP FOOD SAFE *WHEN TRANSPORTING*

When bringing food to a potluck, keep these tips in mind:

- **Keep cold foods cold.** Keep food at or below 40 F. Place in a cooler with a cold source, such as ice.
- **Keep hot foods hot.** Use insulated containers for hot items such as stews and chili. Pack right before you leave and don't open them until serving time.
- Tightly seal and wrap foods.
- Do not transport food with animals.

Note: If you won't be able to keep food adequately hot or cold, serve items such as dried fruit, nuts, peanut butter sandwiches, apples and bananas.