

CONSUMER CORNER

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Pack Safety in Your Picnic

Cookouts and picnics are summertime traditions; a time for family and friends to gather, socialize and have fun. Summer outings can be ruined if safe food handling and preparation practices are not used. Hot summer temperatures can help foodborne bacteria multiply at a rapid rate, spoiling food and causing illness. To prevent illness from occurring, take food safety on your picnic.

Keep cold food at 40 degrees F or colder to prevent bacteria from growing. Pack cold foods in a sturdy, insulated cooler with plenty of ice or frozen gel packs. Freeze your own blocks of ice in clean milk cartons or plastic containers for use in the cooler. The trunk of your car can reach temperatures of 150 degrees F. Transport coolers in the passenger area of your car. When you arrive at the picnic site, put a blanket over the cooler and place it in the shade. Keep the cooler closed until you are ready to eat.

Keep hot foods at 140 degrees F or higher to prevent harmful bacteria from growing. Take-out food or food cooked just before going to the picnic can be carried hot. Wrap hot foods in towels or newspaper, and place inside a box or heavy paper bag. Keep these foods warm on a grill or use within 1 hour. Here are some additional safe picnic tips:

- Bring soap if water is available. Pack moist towelettes and hand sanitizer if your picnic site does not have hand washing facilities available.
- Pack plenty of utensils and dishware. Bring serving utensils for each dish to prevent contamination. Consider using disposable plates and plastic utensils.
- Wash hands before handling food and use clean utensils and containers. Never use utensils that have touched raw meats on any other food item.
- Remember your food thermometer! The color of the meat or its juice is not a reliable indicator of doneness. Always use a clean food thermometer to check the internal temperature of your food.
- If picnic leftovers have been sitting out for more than 1 hour, throw them out! The more time that food has been sitting at unsafe temperature, the more likely harmful bacteria has grown. Here is a great salad to take to a picnic from North Dakota State Extension:

Spinach and Pear Salad

8 c. fresh spinach, rinsed
1 one half c. red grapes, halved
1 c. cucumber, sliced
1 large pear, sliced
2 Tbsp. green onion, chopped
One half c. walnuts, chopped



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Honey Lime Yogurt Dressing

One half c. nonfat plain yogurt

2 Tbsp. honey

1 Tbsp. lime juice

One eighth tsp. salt

One eighth tsp. ground mustard

Pepper to taste

Toss all salad ingredients in a large bowl. In a separate bowl, mix the dressing ingredients. Pour dressing over mixture and toss again. Makes eight servings. Each serving has 110 calories, 5 grams (g) of fat, 3 g of protein, 15 g of carbohydrate, 2 g of fiber and 70 milligrams of sodium.

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