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Food Safety Steps for Successful Community Meals

USDA, Food Safety and Inspection Service

April 2001

Whether preparing food for a family reunion or a community gathering, people who are great cooks at home don't necessarily know how to safely prepare and store large quantities of food for large groups. Food that is mishandled can cause foodborne illness. However, by following some simple steps, volunteer cooks can make the event safe and successful!

For more food safety information, call the toll-free USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at **1-800-535-4555**; TTY: 1-800-256-7072; www.fsis.usda.gov.

For a copy of *Cooking for Groups: A Volunteer's Guide to Food Safety*, write: FCIC, Item #604H, Pueblo, CO 81009.

1 Plan Ahead — Make sure the location meets your needs.

- Be sure you have enough oven, stovetop, refrigerator, freezer, and work space.
- Find out if there's a source of clean water. If not, bring water for preparation and cleaning.

2 Store & Prepare Food Safely

- Refrigerate or freeze perishable food within 2 hours of shopping or preparing.
- Find separate preparation areas in the work space for raw and cooked food.
- Never place cooked food back on the same plate or cutting board that held raw food.
- Wash hands, cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and work surfaces frequently with hot, soapy water.

3 Cook Food to Safe Internal Temperatures — It's the only way to tell if harmful bacteria are destroyed!

- Use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature of meat, poultry, casseroles, and other food. Check temperature in several places to be sure food is safely cooked.
- Never partially cook food for finishing later because you increase the risk of bacterial growth.

4 Transport Food Safely — Keep hot food HOT. Keep cold food COLD.

- Keep cold food at or below 40 °F. Place in a cooler with a cold source such as ice or commercial freezing gels.
- Keep hot food at or above 140 °F. Wrap well and place in an insulated container.

5 Need to Reheat? — Food must be hot and steamy for serving. Just "warmed up" is not good enough.

- Use the stove, oven, or microwave to reheat food to 165 °F. Bring sauces, soups, and gravies to a boil.

6 Keep Food Out of the "Danger Zone" (40–140 °F).

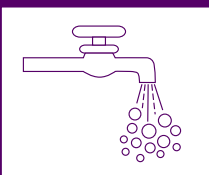
- Keep hot food hot — at or above 140 °F. Place cooked food in chafing dishes, preheated steam tables, warming trays, and/or slow cookers.
- Keep cold food cold — at or below 40 °F. Place food in containers on ice.

7 When In Doubt, Throw it Out!

- Discard food left out at room temperature for more than 2 hours.
- Place leftovers in shallow containers. Refrigerate or freeze immediately.

Fight BAC!™

When preparing for your special event, remember you have the power to Fight BAC!™ and keep your food safe. www.fightbac.org



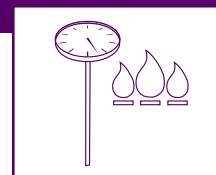
CLEAN

Wash hands and surfaces often.



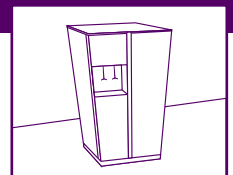
SEPARATE

Don't cross-contaminate.



COOK

Cook to proper temperatures.



CHILL

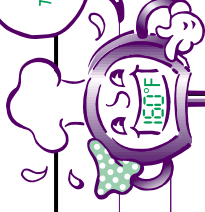
Refrigerate promptly.

Internal Cooking Temperatures

| Product | °F |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Egg & Egg Dishes | |
| Eggs | Cook until yolk & white are firm. |
| Egg casseroles | 160 |
| Egg sauces, custards | 160 |
| Ground Meat & Meat Mixtures | |
| Turkey, Chicken | 165 |
| Beef, Veal, Lamb, Pork | 160 |
| Fresh Beef, Veal, Lamb | |
| Medium Rare | 145 |
| Medium | 160 |
| Well Done | 170 |
| Fresh Pork | |
| Medium | 160 |
| Well Done | 170 |
| Ham | |
| Fresh (raw) | 160 |
| Fully cooked (to reheat) | 140 |
| Roast Beef | |
| Cooked commercially, vacuum sealed, and ready-to-eat | 140 |



Thermy™



"IT'S SAFE TO BITE WHEN THE TEMPERATURE IS RIGHT!"

| Product | °F |
|--|--|
| Poultry | |
| Chicken, Turkey—whole | 180 |
| Chicken, Turkey—dark meat | 180 |
| Poultry—breast | 170 |
| Duck & Goose | 180 |
| Stuffing | |
| Cooked alone or in bird | 165 |
| Sauces, Soups, Gravies, Marinades | |
| Used with raw meat, poultry, or fish | Bring to a boil. |
| Seafood | |
| Fin Fish | Cook until opaque and flakes easily with a fork. |
| Shrimp, lobster, crab | Should turn red and flesh should become pearly opaque. |
| Scallops | Should turn milky white or opaque and firm. |
| Clams, mussels, oysters | Cook until shells open. |
| Leftovers | |
| | 165 |

Note: These temperatures are recommended for consumer cooking. They are not intended for processing, institutional, or foodservice preparation. Food Service Professionals should consult their state or local food code, or health department.