



FOOD AND PICNIC SAFETY



U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Julia A. Casper

Have you ever worried about squirrels or other unwelcomed furry creatures stealing your picnic food? Keeping food safe from pesky wildlife can be a concern during barbecue season. But how often do you think about safely preparing and storing food? Unfortunately, barbecue weather is the ideal environment for bacteria and other pathogens to grow in food and cause foodborne illness. That's why it is important to safely clean,¹ separate,² cook,³ and chill⁴ perishable foods such as meat, poultry, seafood, and egg products.

Approximately 48 million people get sick from foodborne diseases each year.⁵ Even more seriously, 128,000 people are hospitalized and 3,000 die from those same foodborne illnesses.⁵ These illnesses, more commonly known as "food poisoning" are caused by pathogens from unwashed hands, food, and surfaces,¹ cross-contamination,² and foods that are not cooked³ or stored⁴ at the proper temperature. Bacteria that cause illness multiply quickest in the "Danger Zone" of 40° to 140° Fahrenheit (F).³ Symptoms include upset stomach, abdominal cramps, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fever, and dehydration.⁶ Complications can be severe including kidney failure, chronic arthritis, brain and nerve damage, and death,⁷ so it's critical to adhere to the following food safety prevention tips.

Prevention Tips

Clean¹: Bacteria can live on your hands, food, and surfaces in your kitchen. Unless you wash often and properly you can spread germs from one location to another.

- ▶ Wash your hands using soap and running water for 20 seconds.
- ▶ Wash kitchen counter tops, cutting boards, plates, and utensils after each use.
- ▶ Wash fruits and vegetables before use, even if you plan on peeling them.
- ▶ Never wash meat, poultry, or eggs.

Separate²: It is important to keep raw foods separate from other foods to prevent cross-contamination and the spread of bacteria.

- ▶ Use different cutting boards, plates, and utensils for produce such as fruits and vegetables, and for raw foods such as meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs.
- ▶ At the grocery store keep meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs separate from the rest of the food in your cart and shopping bag.
- ▶ At home keep meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs separate from the rest of the food in your refrigerator.

For more information on your local resources, contact:



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Cook³: The “Danger Zone”, between 40° and 140° Fahrenheit (F), is when bacteria multiplies quickly causing illness.

- Use a food thermometer to determine when your food is cooked instead of checking for color or texture.
- After cooking, keep hot foods hot (above 140°F) using a warming tray or slow cooker.
- When using a microwave, cook food to 165° or above.

Chill⁴: Bacteria can grow in perishable foods within 1 – 2 hours, depending on the temperature outside, unless it is stored properly.

- Refrigerate perishable foods promptly to slow the growth of bacteria.
- Freeze food to keep it safe until you are ready to cook it.
- Never thaw or marinate any foods on the kitchen counter.
- When in doubt, throw it out.

¹ Clean. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. <http://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/basics/clean/index.html>. Accessed April 2015.

² Separate. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. <http://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/basics/separate/index.html>. Accessed April 2015.

³ Cook. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. <http://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/basics/cook/index.html>. Accessed April 2015.

⁴ Chill. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. <http://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/basics/chill/index.html>. Accessed April 2015.

⁵ 2011 Estimates of Foodborne Illness in the United States. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/dsFoodborneEstimates/>. Reviewed 3 October 2014. Accessed April 2015.

⁶ Causes of Food Poisoning. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. <http://www.foodsafety.gov/poisoning/causes/index.html>. Accessed March 2015.

⁷ Long-Term Effects. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. <http://www.foodsafety.gov/poisoning/effects/index.html>. Accessed March 2015.