



## DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH County of Riverside

INFORMATIONAL BULLETIN NO. 123-17-DES

DISTRICT ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

### FOOD SAFETY AT BARBECUES & PICNICS

Summer is here and you know what that means... backyard barbecues and picnics at the park! Whatever event brings your family and friends together outdoors, make sure you prepare your food safely! Follow the tips in this guide to enjoy a safe and fun meal outdoors.



#### Did you know?

Bacteria rapidly multiplies in food left at 42°F -134°F. This is called the “Temperature Danger Zone.” It is important to keep your food out of the temperature danger zone so you can minimize bacterial growth.

#### Plan Ahead

Do most of your food preparation at home so there is less risk of contamination. Before heading outdoors make sure you have all the essentials:

- Ice chest with plenty of ice
- Probe thermometer to check food temperatures
- Plenty of clean utensils
- If you don't have access to running water, use a water jug, anti-bacterial soap, and paper towels. Or, consider using moist disposable towelettes for cleaning your hands.



#### Transport Food Safely

Keep your food safe: from the refrigerator/freezer — all the way to the picnic table.

- **Keep cold food cold.** Place cold food in a cooler with ice or frozen gel packs. Cold food should be stored at 41°F or below to prevent bacterial growth. Meat, poultry, and seafood may be packed while still frozen so that they stay cold longer.
- **Organize cooler contents.** Consider packing beverages in one cooler and perishable foods in a separate cooler. That way, as picnickers open and reopen the beverage cooler to replenish their drinks, the perishable foods won't be exposed to warm outdoor air temperatures.
- **Don't cross-contaminate.** Be sure to keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood securely wrapped. This keeps their juices from contaminating prepared/cooked foods or foods that will be eaten raw, such as fruits and vegetables.
- **Clean your produce.** Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under running water before packing them in the cooler — including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten. Rub firm-skinned fruits and vegetables under running water or scrub with a clean vegetable brush while rinsing with running water. Dry the fruits and vegetables with a paper towel. Packaged fruits and vegetables that are labeled “ready-to-eat,” “washed,” or “triple washed” do not need to be washed.

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Department Web Site – [www.rivcoeh.org](http://www.rivcoeh.org)

## Keep Cold Foods Cold and Hot Foods Hot

Keeping food at proper temperatures is critical in preventing the growth of bacteria. The key is to never let your picnic food remain in the “Temperature Danger Zone” for more than 2 hours, or one hour if outdoor temperatures are above 90°F. Instead, follow these simple rules for keeping cold foods cold and hot foods hot.

### Cold Food:

Cold foods should be kept in the cooler at 41°F or colder until ready to be served.

- Foods like potato salad, sliced melon and desserts can be placed in a shallow container and then set deep in a pan filled with ice. Drain off water as ice melts and replace ice frequently.



### Hot Food:

Hot foods should be kept hot at 135°F or hotter.

- Keep food warm on the grill until ready to serve.
- Place food into covered insulated containers or chafing dishes that use a cooking fuel can.



## Grill to Perfection



Just as with cooking indoors, there are important guidelines that should be followed to ensure that your grilled food reaches the table safely.

- **Marinate safely.** Marinate foods in the refrigerator — never on the kitchen counter or outdoors. In addition, if you plan to use some of the marinade as a sauce on the cooked food, reserve a portion separately before adding the raw meat, poultry, or seafood. Don't reuse marinade.
- **Cook food thoroughly.** When it's time to cook the food, have your food thermometer ready. Always use it to be sure your food is cooked to the minimum temperatures listed above. Be sure to properly clean your probe thermometer in between use.
- **Keep “ready” food hot.** Grilled food can be kept hot until served by moving it to the side of the grill rack, just away from the heat. This keeps it hot but prevents overcooking.
- **Don't reuse platters or utensils.** Using the same platter or utensils that previously held raw meat, poultry, or seafood allows bacteria from the raw food's juices to spread to the cooked food. Instead, have clean platters and utensils ready at grill-side to serve your food.

To find more facts like these on BBQ and picnic safety, visit <https://www.fda.gov/Food/default.htm>

\*Document available in an alternate format upon request

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