



COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE • COMMUNITY HEALTH AGENCY  
**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**

INFORMATIONAL BULLETIN NO. 95-09A

DISTRICT ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DIVISION

## FOOD SAFETY AT POTLUCKS

A potluck is a meal to which everyone brings a dish to share. We've all participated in these social occasions at one time or another whether at work or church or private club. When planning a potluck, care must be taken to ensure food safety. **USING THE FOLLOWING FOOD SAFETY TIPS WILL HELP PREVENT FOOD-BORNE ILLNESS.**

- *Time is not on your side!* Perishable foods can stay out under the best of circumstances no more than 4 hours. Consider how long the food has been sitting out before deciding to take another bite. Two hours is a best bet rule for potluck foods.
- *Keep readily perishable foods, such as casseroles and potato salad, cold! (41° F or below).* If you don't have access to a refrigerator or there's not enough room, use an insulated cooler and put ice on top, with food to be kept the coldest on the bottom.
- *Keep hot foods hot!* Use a thermos or insulated dish for serving. General rule is above 135 ° F at all times.
- *Don't cross-contaminate food!* Keep raw meat, poultry and fish well wrapped so that drippings don't contaminate other foods. Use a clean plate. Don't put cooked foods on the same plate that held raw meat. Don't place foods directly on ice that's not of drinking water quality.
- *Keep beverage ice separate from ice used for keeping other foods cold!*
- *Wash your hands before and after working with foods!*
- *Thoroughly cook all raw meat poultry and fish!* Have a thermometer available and cook food to the following internal temperatures
  - Ground Meats of any type or foods with ground meats in them to 157 ° F
  - Eggs or foods with eggs to 145 ° F
  - Pork products 145 ° F
  - Poultry or stuffed meats or other food items stuffed with meats 165 ° F
- *Keep the menu simple!* Avoid fancy food combinations.
- *Use prepackaged condiments!*
- *Keep food and utensils covered until serving time!* Flies and insects, dust, and humans can carry disease causing bacteria.
- *Don't take leftovers home –throw them away!* By the end of the potluck the food has been handled by many people and is probably contaminated.

\*Document available in an alternate format upon request

OFFICES IN: RIVERSIDE, BLYTHE, CORONA, HEMET, INDIO, MURRIETA AND PALM SPRINGS

For more information call (888) 722-4234

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