



# Keep Food Safe at Community Dinners and Potlucks

## Leading Causes of Foodborne Illness

- Failure to cool food properly
- Food not hot enough
- Infected food handler
- Preparation a day or more ahead of time
- Raw food mixed with cooked food
- Food left in the **DANGER ZONE** (41 to 140 F)
- Cross-contamination

## Foods Linked to Foodborne Illness

Many foods can support the growth of microorganisms that may cause foodborne illness. Potentially hazardous foods such as meat, poultry, seafood, fish and eggs are moist and contain protein, which provide good conditions for bacterial growth. Other potentially hazardous foods include cooked rice, alfalfa sprouts, melons, and baked and boiled potatoes.

Safe food handling is important, especially when groups of people are fed at community events. Temperature control is a critical issue for volunteer food handlers. Keep food safe when preparing and serving food to large groups.



## Keep Food Safe at Community Dinners

- Select a person who is familiar with food service sanitation to be in charge. Hold a short training session for volunteers.
- Prepare food in a kitchen specifically designed for quantity food production.
- Plan ahead! Make sure the location meets your needs. Does it have adequate storage space in the refrigerator and freezer? Does it have the cooking and hot-holding equipment you need?
- Obtain food from inspected sources.
- Store and prepare food safely. Refrigerate or freeze potentially hazardous foods in shallow containers within two hours of shopping or preparing.
- Prepare and cook food safely.
- Always work with clean hands.
- Cook food to the recommended safe internal temperature.
- Never partially cook food for finishing later because you increase the risk of bacterial growth.
- For best quality and safety, prepare foods close to serving time.
- Refrigerate ingredients for salads before mixing them together.

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## Keep Food Safe When Serving

- Use clean dishes and utensils to serve. “Germs” can survive and grow in food left on utensils.
- Keep serving portions small when you are not sure how quickly the food will be eaten.
- Replace empty platters with freshly filled ones. Don’t add new food to a serving dish that already contained food.
- Discard any food left out at room temperature for more than two hours.

## Keep Hot Foods Hot

- Hold cooked or reheated food above 140 F; place in hot holding equipment, such as chafing dishes, crock pots and warming trays.
- Reheat previously prepared food to 165 F, using a stove, oven or microwave oven.
- Check temperatures frequently!

## Keep Cold Foods Cold

- Place *cold* food in containers on ice.
- Hold *cold* foods at or below 40 F.

## Keep Food Safe When Storing Leftovers

- Immediately refrigerate or freeze food that was not served. Discard leftovers of food that was served.
- Divide food and place in shallow containers. Don’t put more than 2 inches of thick foods such as beef stew into each container. Soup and other thin foods should be no more than 3 inches deep.
- Use or discard chilled foods on a regular basis. Don’t depend on maximum storage time.

This publication is based on the “Fight BAC” campaign of the Partnership for Food Safety Education: [www.fightbac.org](http://www.fightbac.org)

**For more information about food safety, visit Extension's website:**  
[www.arfamilies.org/health\\_nutrition/food\\_safety.htm](http://www.arfamilies.org/health_nutrition/food_safety.htm)

