Potluck And Picnic Food Safety

Potlucks and picnics are a fun and easy way to get large groups of people together to socialize over good food. Follow the tips provided below so everyone will have a safe and enjoyable time at the potluck or picnic.

- Before you begin your recipe, be sure to *Prepare Your Kitchen* .

It is also a good idea to read over the section dividers found in your *Tasty And Safe Cookbook.*

- The danger zone is the temperature range between 40˚F and 140˚F. When refrigerated or cooked foods are left in this temperature range, bacteria found in and on these foods will begin to grow rapidly. It is important to keep foods below 40˚F or above 140˚F whenever possible.
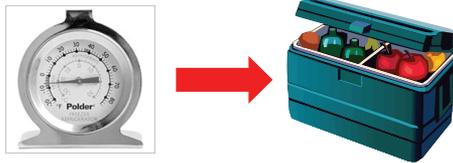
The 2 Hour Rule

The 2 hour rule states that refrigerated or cooked foods left in the danger zone for longer than 2 hours when the air temperature is 40-80˚F must be thrown into the trash. If the air temperature is above 90˚F, the food must be thrown into the trash after 1 hour.

- The two hour rule also applies when transporting food to the potluck or picnic. Use an insulated bag to transport hot foods. Serve them as soon as you arrive or return them to an oven for reheating.
- Keep cold food cold by placing it in a cooler with ice or frozen gel packs. If a refrigerator is present, place the cold food in the refrigerator until it is time to serve. Keep an appliance thermometer in the cooler or refrigerator to make sure the temperature remains below 40˚F.

- When serving cold food items, place the cold food dishes directly on ice, or in a shallow container set in a deep pan filled with ice. Use your food thermometer to check the temperature of your cold foods often, making sure they are below 40˚F.
- When serving hot food items, use a heated chafing dish with a cover. Use your food thermometer to check the temperature of the hot foods often to be sure they are above 140˚F.

Do not forget to bring clean serving utensils for your dish. Tongs work great for finger foods and appetizers.