

Top Five Causes of Foodborne Illness

Foodborne illness in the United States is a major cause of personal distress, preventable death and avoidable economic burden. The Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia has identified five major causes or risk factors that contribute to food-borne illness in this country. They are:

- **Poor Personal Hygiene:** Lack of hand washing or only rinsing after using the toilet, handling raw foods, blowing your nose, etc. contaminates your hands with disease-causing bacteria and viruses. Washing with soap will reduce the potential to spread those germs. Employees who work while ill are implicated in 1 out of every 4 cases of food-borne illness.
- **Inadequate Cooking Temperatures:** Most raw foods, especially meats, contain disease-causing bacteria, such as chicken, beef, pork, and shellfish. We can destroy these bacteria and make the food safe only if we cook the foods to a hot enough temperature. (See chart on page 2 for exact temperatures required.)
- **Improper Holding Temperatures:** Disease causing bacteria grow (and some even produce toxins) when the food is between 41° and 135° F for more than 4 hours. To keep your food safe, keep hot foods at 135° F or above and keep cold foods at 41°F or below.
- **Contaminated Equipment:** Wash and sanitize all food contact surfaces after each period of use, between different raw meats or between raw and ready to eat foods.
- **Foods from Unsafe Sources:** Purchase foods only from reputable suppliers. Shellfish and milk must come from licensed dealers.

Clean Hands for Clean Foods

The staff at your event needs to be thoroughly instructed on how to properly wash their hands. The following is a guide for you to use in this training:

- Use soap and water to wash your hands! Antibacterial lotions do not work on dirty hands nor do they kill viruses.
- Rub your hands together as you wash. The friction helps loosen the germs.
- Wash with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Rinse with clean water to wash away the germs.
- Dry your hands with a paper towel. Cloth towels can spread germs from one person to the next.
- Turn off the water using a paper towel instead of your clean hands.

Wash your hands, as described above, before you begin work and after performing any of these activities:

- Using the toilet
- Handling raw foods
- Coughing or sneezing
- Touching hair, face or body
- Smoking or eating • Handling soiled items or Scraping tableware
- Handling trash or garbage
- Changing disposable gloves

Mobile Food Safety

How to keep your foods safe



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14 Steps to Safe and Sanitary Food Service Events

Church suppers, street fairs, cultural events and similar celebrations call for food service outlets to be set up outside or in locations where keeping foods safe and sanitary is a real challenge. This 14 step guide will help you keep your temporary event as safe as possible.

1. Retail Food Approval: An approval is required of every food vendor at the event. An application is available at the Salem County Health Dept. The attached application must be submitted to the Health Dept. It must be submitted at least 2 weeks prior to the event.



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2. Booth (or portable unit): Design your facility with food safety in mind. The ideal booth will have an overhead cover, be entirely enclosed except for the service window and have only entry. If the floor is dirt, it must also be covered.

3. Menu: Keep your menu and preparation methods on-site simple. Cook to order as much as possible. Keep potentially hazardous foods (eggs, meats, seafood, dairy products, potato or pasta salads, cut melons, and cooked vegetables) to a minimum. Use commercially prepared items, such as potato salad, whenever available. **Under NO circumstances are you allowed to serve foods prepared at home.**

4. Commercial Base of Operations: You must secure and use a commercial kitchen to do any of the following: food preparation, washing utensils, pans, etc., or store foods prior or during the event. A certification must be completed and signed by both the manager of your base and yourself.

5. Cooking: You must have a food thermometer onsite and monitor food temperatures. A thermocouple is required for all thin foods. The following chart will tell you the minimum temperatures required for cooking:

- Hamburgers or other ground beef: 155° F
- All poultry products (chicken, etc.) 165° F
- Pork or any food containing pork 145° F
- Other meats (including seafood) 145° F

If you will be holding potentially hazardous foods hot, a minimum of 135° F is required in all parts of the food at all times. Heat lamps and sterno are not recommended as they rarely work. The temperatures are based on known risks and must be followed.

6. Reheating: If you must reheat a potentially hazardous food for hot holding, the food must be reheated quickly to an internal temperature of at least 165° F. Do not reheat foods in crock pots, steam tables or over sterno.

7. Cooling and Cold Storage: Potentially hazardous foods that are not hot must be kept cold (41°F or less). A commercial refrigerator is required if the foods are not frozen. Allowing these foods to remain warm too long has been the cause of many episodes of food-borne illness. It only takes 4 hours to grow enough bacteria or toxins to make someone ill. Do not keep leftovers at a Special Event. Thus, nothing should be cooled for reuse the next day.

8. Transportation: If food needs to be transported from your commercial kitchen to the event, keep the food covered and provide temperature controls. Use refrigerated trucks and/or insulated containers.

9. Hand Washing: Every food unit must have a place where food handlers can wash their hands often. In a pinch, a hand washing station can consist of a thermos with a spigot, warm water inside, a soap dispenser, a roll of paper towels and a bucket to catch the waste water. See back page for how to properly wash hands.

10. Healthy Workers: Only healthy workers may prepare and serve food. Anyone who shows symptoms such as nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, cramps, sore throat with fever, infected sores on their hands, jaundice, or who has a productive cough must not be allowed in a food unit. Workers must wear clean outer garments, have their hair secured, and must not smoke inside the food unit.

11. Food Handling: Employees must not touch ready to eat foods with their bare hands. Use tongs, disposable gloves, forks, wax paper pieces, etc. Touching food with bare hands transfers any viruses or bacteria to the food.

12. Dishwashing/Cleaning: Wash your pots, pans, utensils at your commercial kitchen. Bring extra utensils to the event in case they are dropped, etc. Keep clean pots, etc. covered when not in use. Use disposable products as much as you can. Sanitize food contact surfaces with 1 capful of bleach in 1 gallon of warm water. Store wiping rags in same.

13. Ice: Ice must come from a commercial producer. Ice used for consumption must not be used to store foods or beverages. Never use your bare hands to scoop ice. Use a clean ice scoop!

14. Insect Control/Waste: Keep foods covered to protect them from insects. Do not use pesticides! Keep garbage covered. Flies and other insects are carriers of food-borne diseases.