

The Post Rock Connection
Post Rock Extension District #1 Family and Consumer Sciences Column
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Barbecue Basics: Tips to prevent foodborne illness

Warm days full of sunshine can only mean one thing: summer is just around the corner. And summer weather means it is BBQ season.

Whether you're barbecuing or grilling, cooking and eating outdoors in warm weather can be challenging when it comes to food safety. Bacteria in food multiply faster at temperatures between 40°F and 140°F, so the spring and summer heat can pose a problem. Here are some easy things you can do to help keep everyone at your table, picnic, barbecue, or campsite safe from foodborne illness.

Wash Hands. Pretty basic, right? But not everyone does it. Wash hands well and often, with soap and water, scrubbing for at least 20 seconds, especially after using the bathroom and before cooking or eating. If you're in an outdoor setting with no bathroom, use a water jug, some soap, and paper towels. Consider carrying moist, disposable towelettes for cleaning your hands.

Keep Raw Food Separate from Cooked Food. Don't use a plate that has potentially touched or has been contaminated by raw meat, poultry, or seafood for anything else unless you first wash the plate in hot, soapy water. Keep utensils and surfaces clean. Don't use the same utensil to place raw meats on a grill, then remove cooked meats as this may introduce cross contamination. It is recommended to wash utensils that have touched raw meats if they must also be used to handle cooked meats.

Marinate Food in the Refrigerator, not out on the counter. And if you want to use some of the marinade as a sauce on your food after it's been cooked, keep a separate portion in reserve. Don't reuse marinade that contained raw meat.

Cook Food Thoroughly. To kill any harmful bacteria that may be present, food must reach specific internal temperatures; use a food thermometer to check. Hamburgers should be cooked to 160°F. If a thermometer is not available, make sure hamburgers brown all the way through, and are not pink. Chicken should be cooked to at least 165°F. If you partially cooked food in the microwave, oven, or stove to reduce grilling time, do this immediately before food goes on the hot grill. Partially cooking food ahead of time can allow bacteria to survive and multiply so that subsequent cooking cannot destroy them. When packing for an outdoor barbecue location, in addition to bringing a grill and cooking fuel to an outdoor location, remember to pack a food thermometer to check that your food reaches a safe internal temperature.

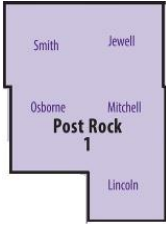
Refrigerate and Freeze Food Promptly. It can be hard to remember while a party is going on, but you shouldn't leave food out of the cooler or off the grill for more than two hours. Never leave food out for more than one hour when the outside temperature is above 90°F. When reheating these foods, be sure it reaches 165°F.

Keep Hot Food Hot. Keep hot food at or above 140°F. Wrap it well and place it in an insulated container. Thinking of bringing hot take-out food such as fried chicken or barbecue to an outdoor party? Make sure to eat or refrigerate it within two hours of *buying* it.

Keep Cold Food Cold. Cold food should be held at or below 40°F. Place foods like chicken salad and desserts that are in individual serving dishes directly on ice or in a shallow container set in a deep filled pan of ice. Drain off water as ice melts and replace ice frequently.

Nothing can ruin your summer fun faster than getting sick from unsafe food. Make sure all of these tips for safe food handling are part of your summer plans.

The Post Rock District of K-State Research and Extension serves Jewell, Lincoln, Mitchell, Osborne, and Smith Counties. Contact Jamie Rathbun at jrathbun@ksu.edu or by calling 785-524-4432. Stay connected with "Post Rock Extension" on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. Our website is www.postrock.ksu.edu.



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