



YUMMMM!! Tips on Keeping Food Safe

Summer is picnic time: barbeques, cook-outs, and pot lucks. Nothing brings a congregation together like good food in a friendly environment. Group outings such as these create unique concerns related to food preparation and food-borne illness. It is important that churches develop a “best practices” approach for any event where food will be served.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, there is a noticeable increase in foodborne illness during the summer months, for two main reasons:

1. Warmer temperatures lead bacteria to multiply and spread at a faster rate.
2. Preparing food outdoors and outdoor dining make safe food handling more difficult.

To ensure that those participating in church-hosted events are safe, steps should be taken to make certain that proper food preparation and handling procedures are followed.

Before establishing guidelines to be followed at any event where food will be served, it is important to contact officials in your area to inquire about food safety reg-

ulations specific to your jurisdiction. Local officials should be able to provide valuable information and may be able to provide you with materials to help implement your food handling procedures.

Below are some guidelines for when food is being served at a church event:

- If food is prepared off-site and brought to the church, be sure it is properly refrigerated and/or heated before serving.
- Cover all foods in refrigerators and freezers until ready to use or serve.
- When storing food in the refrigerator, be sure to label the container with i) what is being stored and ii) the date it was prepared.
- Wash hands before and after handling food.
- Wash and sanitize cutting boards, dishes, and cutlery before handling each food item.
- Use separate cutting boards for cutting produce and meats.
- Properly thaw all frozen meat and poultry before cooking.
- Use disposable plastic gloves when handling food without utensils.
- Use separate utensils for each food item while cooking.

- Use separate serving utensils for each food item while serving.
- Adhere to the “use by” dates on all meat, poultry, fish, etc. to ensure that the item is not expired.
- Adhere to the “sell by” dates on produce to ensure that the item is not expired.
- When cooking meat or poultry, cook to the USDA recommended internal temperature.
 - Whole cuts of meat, beef, veal, lamb, and pork should be cooked to 145 degrees Fahrenheit.
 - Ground meats, such as beef, veal, lamb and pork should be cooked to 160 degrees Fahrenheit
 - All poultry should be cooked to 165 degrees Fahrenheit
 - Fish and shellfish should be cooked to 145 degrees Fahrenheit
- Leftovers and premade dishes should be reheated to 165 degrees Fahrenheit.

Help your church stay safe this summer, and keep this guide handy for the fall and winter festivities as well.