

# When cooking outside, don't let food safety slide

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(HealthDay)—Food is a big part of many Fourth of July celebrations.

But take care when making and storing your meal, so that a bout of food poisoning doesn't ruin the rest of your holiday plans, a dietary expert advises.

When having a picnic or barbecue, it's important to keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot.

"Cold foods should be ideally put in shallow containers and then kept on ice to keep them below 40 [degrees](#) Fahrenheit. Hot foods should be kept warm—above 160 degrees—to prevent bacteria from growing on food," said Liz Weinandy, a dietitian at Ohio State University's Wexner Medical Center.

Use a thermometer when cooking. In general, ground meats like hamburgers should be cooked through to an internal temperature of at least 160 degrees F, and poultry like chicken breasts to 165 degrees.

"Make sure to use separate cutting boards, utensils, tongs and plates for raw meat and cooked products. Anything that touches raw meat should be completely sanitized before being used again, or use clean ones to avoid cross contamination," Weinandy said in a university news release.

"Make sure to refrigerate leftovers within two hours of sitting them out to eat. If it is over 90 degrees outside, this time shrinks to one hour," she noted.

"If food is left out longer than this, it can grow some serious bacteria. Avoid eating [food](#) that has been sitting out that long and throw it away instead of sending it home with guests or keeping it for lunch the next day," Weinandy advised.

**More information:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [food safety](#).

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