Summer Food Safety

Keep it hot
• Use a meat thermometer to accurately assure that burgers and chicken are done. Ground meat should be 160°F while poultry should be 180°F. If you don’t have a thermometer, make sure there is no pink in the middle.
• Don’t partially precook at home as this encourages the growth of bacteria.
• If possible, cook foods at the picnic site. If you bring hot foods, keep them wrapped in insulated containers and use them before they start to cool.

Chill out
• Cold foods should be cold when you leave the house. A cooler will not chill them properly.
• Pack a cooler with ice surrounding the food. Replenish the ice as it melts. Freeze single-serving juice containers and pack those around food instead of ice.
• The trunk of the car gets much hotter than outside temperatures. Keep the cooler in the air-conditioned interior while traveling and put it in the shade at the picnic site.
• Don’t bring home leftovers. The cooler will not chill them to a low enough temperature to be safe.

Don’t cross-contaminate
• Germs from one food can contaminate others. Use disposable utensils and dishes, and throw them out after a single use.
• Double-bag raw meat in sealed plastic bags and put the bags in a separate cooler or at the bottom of the cooler so juices can’t drip onto other foods. Clean the cooler well when you get home.

When in doubt...
...throw it out! Never eat food unless you’re sure it’s safe. You can always rely on peanut butter sandwiches, crackers, salami, hard cheese and other nonperishables when you picnic.

Food poisoning
Microorganisms that grow on food can attack your digestive tract or create harmful toxins.
Young children, pregnant women, elderly people and those with compromised immune systems are most at risk. Symptoms usually appear from 4 to 48 hours after eating. Symptoms include nausea or vomiting, headache, fever, diarrhea, abdominal cramping and sometimes neurological problems such as double vision or paralysis.
See your doctor if you suspect food poisoning.

For more information
• Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov/nce-dod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/food-borneinfections_g.htm
• USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline 800-535-4555

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