

Keep Food Safety in Mind When Tailgating

Extension Consumer Food Safety Fact Sheet

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Tailgating is popular with football fans, who flock to games with their grills and favorite tailgating foods, but they must keep in mind several food safety measures to keep from getting sick.

Food safety can be more challenging when preparing and eating foods outdoors where refrigeration and running water are likely not available.

The following tips help people reduce their risk of getting foodborne illness when tailgating.

Proper planning is key.

- Plan the menu with game time in mind. In addition to pregame grilling, plan post-game snacks such as cookies, fruits, snack mixes, or vegetables that don't need cooking and are not perishable.
- Plan party foods for the number of guests expected to minimize leftovers and food storage before, during, and after the game.
- Bring along soap and water for cleaning and hand washing if none will be available on-site. Moist towelettes and bleach wipes also can be used for cleaning hands and surfaces.
- Make and bring along a "tailgating kit" with the most-used utensils, such as clean serving spoons, paper towels and trash bags, for every game.
- Ask out-of-town guests coming to your tailgate to bring less perishable items.

Think about appropriate storage and handling.

Be sure to chill perishable foods, such as meats for grilling, salads, and side dishes, before transferring them to an insulated cooler. Keep that cooler packed with several inches of ice or frozen gel packs. Use a refrigerator thermometer in the cooler so you can check to be sure the food stays at 40 degrees Fahrenheit (40°F) or below. Shade coolers or cover them with a blanket if no shade is available to keep ice from melting quickly.

- Keep raw foods separate from cooked foods. If marinating meat for grilling at the stadium, do so in a disposable, resealable plastic bag. Be sure to use a different plate for holding cooked meat than the one used for raw meat.
- If bringing take-out food, make that the last stop before the stadium to keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. Eat the food within 2 hours of purchase (1 hour if the outside temperature is above 90°F.)
- Wrap and stow leftovers in the cooler or discard them. If perishable food is left out for 2 hours or more (1 hour or more if the temperature is above 90°F), it should be discarded.

- To keep foods such as soup, chili, and stew hot, use an insulated container. Fill the container with boiling water, let it stand for a few minutes, empty and put in the hot food. If you keep the insulated container closed, the food should stay hot (above 140°F) for several hours.

Cook responsibly.

- If grilling, use a food thermometer to ensure the food has reached a safe minimum internal temperature. Raw beef, pork and lamb steaks and roasts should be 145°F with a 3-minute post-grill rest time; raw ground beef, lamb, pork, and veal should be 160°F; and all poultry should be 165°F.
- Make sure cooking appliances are shut down and cooling or otherwise stowed appropriately before going to the game to reduce the risk of fire hazards.

Serve responsibly.

- Shade the serving table, if possible.
- Wait to remove salads and sides from coolers until ready to eat.

For more information, contact Londa Vanderwal Nwadike at lnwadike@ksu.edu or 913-307-7391.

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