

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Cooking large quantities of food for groups can be a challenge. It is important to handle food carefully when preparing for large groups and gatherings to protect yourself, your family and your community at gatherings.

MINIMIZE THE RISK – PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR COMMUNITY

Here are some simple things to keep in mind when organizing community events to make sure that the food you prepare and serve is safe for you and your community.

Planning

Good planning is the first step when preparing foods for large groups. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- How much storage space is available at the event location, particularly for refrigeration and freezing.
- What food will be cooked, where and how it will be cooked.
- How food will be transported (raw or cooked).
- What equipment is available to heat the food.
- Where the food will be served.
- Is there running water? If not, be prepared to bring containers of drinking water.

Preparing and Storing

Preparing and storing food properly helps prevent the growth of bacteria. Here are some simple things you can do to keep food safe.

- Wash hands well with soap and warm water to a slow count of 20 before, after and between handling different foods, after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and handling money and pets.
- Wash all pots and pans, dishes, and utensils in hot soapy water, and rinse well.
- Wash and sanitize work surfaces like cutting boards and counter tops including food thermometers.
- Use a separate cutting board for raw meats and another for ready-to-eat foods like berries and vegetables.
- Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs separate from ready-to-eat food.
- Store food in closed containers.

“Danger zone”

The “danger zone” for high risk foods is between 4° - 60°C (40° - 140°F). Keep high risk foods out of the danger zone, to prevent the growth of bacteria and keep food safe.

- *Keep hot food hot at 60°C (140°F) or higher until it is served.*
- *Place cooked food in chafing dishes, preheated steam tables, warming trays to keep it hot.*
- *Keep cold food cold at 4°C (40°F) in the fridge or on ice until served.*





Cooking

Here are some simple things you can do to ensure that any germs that may be in the food are destroyed during cooking.

- Cook small quantities of food at a time and make sure the food is cooked evenly and thoroughly.
- Make sure you cook the food to safe minimum internal temperatures.
- Use a clean food thermometer to check the internal cooking temperature of meat, poultry, waterfowl, or fish. You can't always tell if food is cooked by the look, colour or smell - especially for big portions. Insert the thermometer in the thickest part of the meat.

If you have to transport high risk foods from one location to another, keep them out of the danger zone. Place hot foods in insulated containers and cold food in a cooler.

Serving

Here are some simple things you can do to make sure that food doesn't get contaminated when being served.

- Use clean plates, platters and utensils to serve food.
- Do not leave prepared foods in open containers for long periods of time.
- Do not add more food to serving dishes that are already in use. Replace with new serving dishes each time you re-stock.

Cooling

Cool food quickly to prevent spoilage and the growth of bacteria. To cool food safely and quickly:

- Cut large pieces of meat into smaller pieces and divide a large batch of food into smaller ones.
- Cool cooked potentially hazardous foods to 20°C (68°F) or less within 2 hours and then to 4°C (40°F) or less within 4 hours.
- Place food in shallow containers to ensure fast and even cooling and refrigerate
- Do not cover food right away when it is still hot. Covering may prevent fast cooling because heat and steam cannot escape from the food.
- When large quantities of foods require cooling and refrigeration space is limited, other methods of cooling such as ice water baths should be used.

Leftover Foods

Here's what to keep in mind when you reheat leftover food.

- Use a stove, oven, or a microwave to reheat food safely to 74°C (165°F) or higher. It is not recommended to reheat leftovers in slow cookers, steam tables or chafing dishes.
- Bring gravies, soups or sauces to a boil before serving.
- Eat or use any leftovers kept in the refrigerator within 2 to 4 days.
- Only reheat food once – then throw out any leftover reheated food.

When in doubt, throw it out!

Always make sure that the refrigerator temperature is at 4°C (40°F) or lower! Refrigerate or keep food on ice within 2 hours of preparation.

For additional information and for the recommended minimum internal cooking temperatures and storage times, talk to your local Environmental Health Officer or visit HealthyCanadians.gc.ca/FirstNationsFoodSafety.