

Perfect, Food Safe Picnics!

Picnic and barbecue season mean lots of outdoor fun with family and friends. Keep it fun by keeping food tasty to eat AND safe to eat! Pack and transport food safely from your refrigerator/freezer — all the way to the picnic table.

- Keep cold food cold. Place cold food in a cooler with ice or frozen gel packs.

Short on freezer packs? Freeze SOME water bottles or beverage boxes and put in this cooler. Cold food should be stored at 40 °F or below to prevent bacterial growth. Meat, poultry, and seafood may be packed while still frozen to stay colder longer. If you're taking meat/meat salad sandwiches, you could make them the day before and freeze. Put sandwiches in a cooler to stay safe, thaw slowly, and be ready to eat when you are!

- Organize cooler contents. Even though you may have used SOME frozen drinks to keep the meat/salads/sandwiches cool, think about packing MOST of the beverages in a separate cooler. As picnickers open and reopen the beverage cooler to replenish their drinks, the perishable foods won't be exposed to warm outdoor air temperatures.

- Keep coolers closed: Once at the picnic site, limit the number of times the cooler is opened as much as you can. This helps to keep the contents cold longer.

- Don't cross-contaminate. If you take raw meat, poultry, and seafood to grill on-site, keep it securely wrapped. This keeps meat juices from contaminating prepared/cooked foods or foods that will be eaten raw, such as fruits and vegetables.

- Clean your produce. Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under running tap water before packing them in the cooler — including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten. Rub firm-skinned fruits and vegetables under running tap water or scrub with a clean vegetable brush while rinsing with running tap water. Dry fruits and vegetables with a clean cloth towel or paper towel. Packaged fruits and vegetables that are labeled "ready-to-eat," "washed," or "triple washed" need not be washed.

- Cold perishable food should be kept in the cooler at 40 °F or below until serving time.

Once you've served it, it should not sit out for longer than 2 hours, and only 1 hour if the outdoor temperature is above 90 °F. If it does — discard it.

- Did you grill or cook food? Hot food should be kept hot, at or above 140 °F.

Wrap it well and place it in an insulated container until serving. These foods should not sit out for more than 2 hours, or 1 hour in temperatures above 90 °F. If food is left out longer, throw it away to be safe.

Outdoor Hand Cleaning -- As Always, food safety begins with proper hand cleaning. If you don't have access to running water, use a water jug, some soap, and paper towels. Or, consider using moist disposable towelettes for cleaning your hands.

Frozen Fruit Cups Here's a recipe to make ahead. On the morning of the picnic, put in the cooler. Should be thawed and ready to eat at the picnic!

Ingredients: 2 cups fresh strawberries, sliced • 2 tsp sugar • 1 med banana, sliced • 2 kiwi, sliced

Instructions: 1. Mix strawberries with sugar in a bowl. Let mixture sit 20–30 minutes while strawberries make juice. 2. Add banana and kiwis. 3. Scoop ½ cup of the mixture into each of six muffin cups lined with paper liners. 4. Freeze. Remove from freezer about 20–30 minutes before serving.

Source: <https://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu/recipes>