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Summer Picnic Preparation

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Summer time means picnic time. We all love picnics. It is a great opportunity to spend time with your family. It is also fun to be outside.

We expect to see flies, mosquitoes or ants at a picnic. But it's the bugs we can't see, the "harmful bacteria" that make more people sick. Dangerous bacteria love the warm, humid days of summer. They multiply faster during the sunny hot days. Bacteria grow rapidly in the danger zone between 40° F and 140° F. You cannot taste or smell these bad bacteria. However, if food is mishandled it can cause an illness. These flu-like symptoms are caused by a foodborne illness. So, food transported without ice or an ice pack or left out in the sun at a picnic won't stay safe for long.

It is better to prepare before your picnic. Make sure you pack safety in your picnic basket. Prepare and store food safely, then pack it safely for traveling to the picnic site. You should carry the cooler inside the air-conditioned car, not in the trunk. At the picnic, keep the cooler in the shade. Keep the lid closed and avoid repeated openings. If possible, replenish the ice as it melts.



Tips for Success

1. Keep it Clean!

- When planning to eat outdoors, bring your own soap and water; hand sanitizer can be used in a pinch.
- Find out if your picnic destination has a source of safe drinking water. If not, bring water or moist towelettes for cleaning surfaces.
- Before you pack them in the cooler; rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under running tap water. Even rinse those with skins and rinds that are not eaten.

2. Separate

- Coolers are opened a lot, mainly to grab a cold beverage, so pack them in a separate cooler. This will keep perishable food cold until it is served, as well as avoiding cross contamination.
- Pack enough utensils and plates for both eating and serving food. Don't use the same utensil or platter for raw and cooked meat and poultry.
- Sauce that is used to marinate raw meat, poultry or seafood should not be used on cooked food unless it is boiled first.

3. Keep Cold Foods Cold!

- If you are grilling, pack raw meat and poultry separate from cooked foods or foods meant to be eaten raw.
- Pack the cooler just before leaving home; pack only the quantity of food you think you will use.

- Fill your cooler to capacity with plenty of ice or ice packs to maintain a cool temperature for longer.
- Place leftover foods in the cooler soon after grilling or serving. Any food left outside for more than an hour should be discarded. If there is still ice in the cooler when you get home, the leftovers are okay to eat.

4. Keep Hot Foods Hot!

- Bring a food thermometer. You need it to check that meat and poultry have reached a safe internal temperature to destroy the bad bacteria (Cook beef to 160°F or poultry to 165°F, or fish to 145°F).
- Do not partially grill extra hamburgers to use later. Once you begin cooking hamburgers, cook them until completely done so that bacteria are destroyed.

Let's Talk

Get the whole family to plan two picnic menus. Plan one menu for when a cooler will be available and another menu for when a cooler is not available. Talk about what food needs to be kept cold in the cooler with ice packs to minimize the growth of harmful bacteria. Have them help you choose food that will be safe to eat while sitting in the hot sun. Identify rules for keeping food as cold as possible while at the picnic table. Families might consider nonperishable picnic options such as washed whole fruit instead of cut-up fruit salad.



Recipe for Health:

Apple Tuna Sandwiches

Yield - 3 servings

Ingredients:

- 1 can tuna, packed in water (6.5 ounces, drained)
- 1 apple
- 1/4 cup yogurt, lowfat vanilla
- 1 teaspoon mustard
- 1 teaspoon honey
- 6 slices whole wheat bread
- 3 lettuce leaves

Instructions

1. Wash and peel the apple. Chop it into small pieces.
2. Drain the water from the can of tuna.
3. Put the tuna, apple, yogurt, mustard, and honey in a medium bowl. Stir well.
4. Spread 1/2 cup of the tuna mix onto each 3 slices of bread.
5. Top each sandwich with a washed lettuce leaf and a slice of bread.
6. Place in refrigerator until ready to pack into cooler.