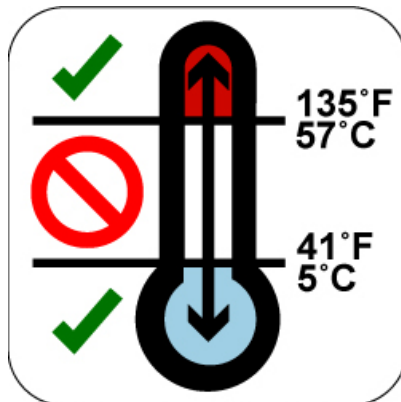


Potluck Food Safety

No matter the occasion, when friends and family get together, food is often served. It's fun to share your favorite dishes, but it's important to make sure that your food doesn't make anyone sick. The Ohio Department of Health recommends the following tips to make sure the foods at your next potluck are safe for all to enjoy.

Temperature Control

One of the most important points to ensuring your food is safe is keeping perishables out of the temperature “danger zone”, which is a range of temperatures where bacteria grows the fastest in food. The danger zone for perishable foods is between 41° F and 135° F.



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Preparing for the Potluck

- Don't prepare food if you or someone in your home is sick. Sharing food is good, but sharing illness is not. If you or a family member is sick, think about waiting until the next potluck to make food.
- When deciding what to bring, consider foods that don't require temperature control such as baked goods or pre-packaged snacks. If you do bring a hot or cold food, you'll need to find a way to keep the hot foods hot and cold foods cold throughout the event.
- Wash your hands before preparing any foods. Use utensils as much as possible during food preparation to limit contact with hands.

- Make foods that are easy to serve with utensils to limit the need for hands to come in direct contact with the prepared food.

Transporting Your Food

- All foods should be transported in covered containers to prevent contamination.
- Hot foods need to be kept above 135° F. An insulated container should be used to keep the foods hot during transportation.
- Cold foods need to be kept below 41° F. A cooler with ice or gel packs should be used to keep the foods cold during transportation.

Sharing Your Food

- Provide plenty of clean utensils so food can be served without touching it directly.
- Use slow cookers, chafing dishes, or some other type of warmer to keep hot foods above 135° throughout the event.
- Keep cold foods on ice or some other type of chilled container while being served to keep them below 41° F.

Leftovers

- Leftover foods should be put away once the meal has completed. Use a probe thermometer to check hot and cold food temperatures to determine whether they should be put in refrigeration for saving or discarded:
 - Hot foods that have been below 135° F for more than two hours should be thrown away.
 - Cold foods that have been above 41° F for more than two hours should be thrown away.