



United States Department of Agriculture

**Food Safety and Inspection Service**

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# News Release

USDA Office of Communications

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## **Fill Your Picnic Basket with Food Safety to Avoid Getting Sick this Memorial Day**

WASHINGTON, May 22, 2019 — Memorial Day kicks off the official start of summer. The U.S. Department of Agriculture wants to remind you to prevent foodborne illness before you light up that grill and pack up the cooler. Hot and humid weather combined with outdoor activities, provide the perfect environment for harmful bacteria to multiply on food and make people sick.

Fill your picnic basket with these items that will help keep your summer fun while handling food at your Memorial Day gathering:

- If running water is not available, bring soap, paper towels, hand sanitizer or moist towelettes. This will help keep your hands clean throughout the day especially after handling any raw meat or poultry.
- Avoid cross contamination by using clean plates and utensils. Don't place cooked food on a plate that once held raw meat or poultry.
- Bring a couple of portable coolers – one for perishable foods and one for beverages– filled with ice. Perishable items like raw chicken, burgers or appetizers like fresh salsa, guacamole or bean salads should be kept at 40°F or below.
- Don't forget the food thermometer! Cook meat and poultry to the safe internal temperatures. Checking the temperature is the only way to know if your food is safe to consume. USDA recommended safe minimum internal temperatures are:
  - Beef, pork, lamb and veal (steaks, roasts and chops): 145°F with a three-minute rest time
  - Fish: 145°F
  - Ground meats (beef, veal, lamb, pork): 160°F
  - Whole poultry, poultry breasts and ground poultry: 165°F
- Bring the right amount of food that you will consume at your picnic, but if you still have some leftovers, don't leave them outdoors for more than 2 hours.

Foodborne illnesses can be prevented by properly handling food at home or outdoors. Make sure to follow our four steps - Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill - to food safety all year and during special occasions like this Memorial Day holiday.

*Need more food safety information?* Call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at (1-888-674-6854) Monday through Friday, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. ET, or email or chat at [AskKaren.gov](https://askkaren.gov).

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