

16 STEPS TO SAFE AND SANITARY FOOD SERVICE EVENTS

Church suppers, street fairs, civic celebrations and other similar events call for food service outlets to be set up out-of doors or in locations where keeping foods safe and sanitary becomes a real challenge. This 16-step guide will help you keep your temporary event free of the risk of food poisoning.

1 Permits. Check with your local government agency about permits and code requirements. Be prepared to tell the department where you will hold the event, what you plan to serve, where the food will come from, how you will prepare and transport it, and the precautions you will take to prevent contamination.

In the event of a foodborne illness, it will help if you can show you ran your event "by the book".

2 Booth. Design your booth with food safety in mind. The ideal booth will have an overhead covering, be entirely enclosed except for the serving window and have only one door or flap for entry. Clear plastic or light colored screening on side walls will aid visibility. Only food workers may be permitted inside the food preparation area. Always exclude animals.

The more your food is exposed to outsiders, the greater the likelihood of contamination.

3 PIC (Person-in-Charge). All food booths must have a **person-in-charge**. The PIC must be at the booth at all times when food is being prepared/served. The PIC must have knowledge of foodborne illnesses, safe food handling, and food workers' health. The PIC must also have authority to discard food or prohibit people from entering the booth.

The PIC has the sole responsibility to ensure that the food is protected, prepared safely, and kept safe until served.

4 Menu. Keep your menu simple. Use only commercially prepared pre-cooked foods when possible. Use single-portioned meats to avoid chopping/cutting in the booth. Cook to order when possible. Use only foods from an approved source, not foods that have been prepared at home.

Complete control over your food, from source to service, is the key to safe, sanitary food service.

5 Cooking. Use a food product thermometer to check cooking and cold holding temperatures of potentially hazardous foods. Hamburgers and other ground beef must be cooked to 155° F, poultry parts to 165° F, pork and other meats to 145° F.

Most illnesses from temporary events can be traced back to lapses in temperature control.

6 Re-heating rapidly. Heat foods to above 165° in less than 2 hours. Do not attempt to heat foods in crock pots, steam tables or other hot holding devices, or over sterno.

Slow-cooking mechanisms may activate bacteria and never reach killing temperatures.

7 Cooling and cold storage. Foods must be cooled in a two stage process. From the food's hot temperature to 70° in 2 hours, then to 41° F in 4 hours. The food must then be held at 41° F or below until it is served. To cool food quickly, place it in a metal container in an ice bath and stir frequently. Check the temperature of the food to make sure that it is cooling rapidly enough to meet the two stage cooling requirements. Meats can be cooled by placing in a single layer in a shallow pan and refrigerate.

Allowing hazardous foods to be in the temperature danger zone (41° - 140° F) for too long has been the cause of many foodborne illnesses.

8 Transportation. During transportation of food (including ice) from one location to another, keep it in a tightly enclosed container that is able to maintain temperatures. Use coolers (below 41° F) or hot holding units (above 140° F).

Neglecting safety and temperatures during transportation of food can provide an environment for bacteria growth and put your customers' health at risk.

9 No Bare Hand Contact. All ready-to-eat (RTE) foods cannot be touched by bare hands. A barrier (tongs, deli paper, utensils, non-latex gloves) must be used between the hands and any food that will not be cooked or heated further after handling.

Improperly washed hands are the number one transmitters of contamination to food that causes foodborne illnesses.

10 Hand Washing. A hand washing station must be set up with a flow of water. A large urn/drink dispenser with a valve, hand soap, paper towels, and a bucket is required. The urn must be filled with hot water and placed on a table/stand with the bucket underneath. Turn on the flow of water and wash your hands as you would in a sink.

Frequent and thorough hand washing remains the first line of defense in preventing foodborne disease.

11 Food Handling. Avoid hand contact with raw foods and food contact surfaces. Eliminate hand contact with ready-to-eat foods. Keep the food covered and protected from all sources of contamination and keep it hot or cold.

Touching food with bare hands or leaving it exposed to the environment will introduce harmful bacteria into the food.

12 Health and Hygiene. Only healthy workers can prepare and serve food. Anyone who shows symptoms of disease (cramps, diarrhea, vomiting, fever, jaundice, etc.) or who has open sores/wounds/infections on the hands must not be allowed in the food booth. Workers must wear clean clothes and must not smoke or eat in the booth.

Ill or unclean workers are the frequent cause of foodborne illness. Smoking, besides being unhealthy

and aesthetically unappealing in food preparation, contributes to the contamination of workers' hands.

13 Dish Washing/Extra Utensils. Use

disposable utensils and dishware for service to the public. Keep your hands away from food contact surfaces, and never reuse disposable ware. If you do not have dish washing facilities on site, bring at least 6 of each utensil as backups. If washing on-site, wash in hot soapy water, rinse in clear hot water, sanitize in lukewarm water with chlorine, and air dry.

Clean utensils provide protection against the transfer of harmful bacteria.

14 Ice. Ice used to cool cans and beverages cannot be used in drinks. Ice used in drinks is a food and must be stored in a clean covered container and dispensed with an ice scoop.

Ice can become contaminated with bacteria and viruses, which can be transmitted by the ice causing foodborne illnesses.

15 Wiping Cloths. Store wiping cloths in a sanitizing solution (1 ounce bleach to 1 gallon water) between uses. Change this solution every two hours. A spray bottle of sanitizing solution can also be used with paper towels to sanitize surfaces.

Well-sanitized work surfaces prevent cross contamination and discourage flies.

16 Insect Control and Wastes. Keep foods covered to protect them from insects. Any insecticide used requires strict controls and total protection of the food and food contact surfaces (call you local health department for guidance). Place garbage and paper waste in a refuse container with a tight lid. Provide a waste container in the booth. Dispose of wastewater in a sewer or public toilet.

Flies and other insects are carriers of foodborne diseases. The chemical used to kill them can be toxic to humans.

THE TOP SIX CAUSES OF FOOD POISONING

From past experience the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention list these six circumstances as the ones most likely to lead to illnesses. Check through the list to make sure your event has covered these common causes of foodborne disease:

- ✓ ***Inadequate Cooling and Cold Holding***
More than half of all food poisonings are due to keeping foods out at room temperature for more than 2-4 hours.
- ✓ ***Preparing Food Too Far Ahead of Service***
Food prepared 12 or more hours before service increases the risk of temperature abuse.
- ✓ ***Poor Personal Hygiene and Infected Personnel***
Poor hand washing habits and food handlers working while ill are implicated in 1 out of every 4 food poisonings.
- ✓ ***Inadequate Reheating***
When leftovers are not reheated to above 165° F, illness often results.
- ✓ ***Inadequate Hot Holding***
Cooked foods not held at above 140° F until served can become highly contaminated.
- ✓ ***Contaminated Raw Foods & Ingredients***
Serving raw shellfish or raw milk that is contaminated, or using contaminated raw eggs in sauces and dressings, has often led to outbreaks of foodborne disease. It is always safer to use pasteurized products.

CLEAN HANDS FOR CLEAN FOODS

Since the staff at temporary food service events may not be professional food workers, it is important that they be thoroughly instructed in the proper method of washing their hands. The following may serve as a guide:

- ✓ Use soap and water.
- ✓ Rub your hands vigorously as you wash them.
- ✓ Wash ALL surfaces, including:
 - Back of hands
 - Wrists
 - Between fingers
 - Under fingernails using a good brush.
- ✓ Rinse your hands well.
- ✓ Dry hands with a paper towel.
- ✓ Turn off the water using paper towel instead of your bare hands.

Wash your hands in this fashion before you begin work and frequently during the day, especially after performing any of these activities:

- Using the toilet
- Handling raw food
- Coughing or sneezing
- Touching hair, face, or body
- Smoking/Eating
- Handling soiled items
- Scraping tableware
- Disposing of garbage

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FOOD SAFETY AT TEMPORARY EVENTS



ARE YOUR HOT FOODS HOT?

COLD FOODS COLD?

EQUIPMENT AND UTENSILS CLEAN?