

# Food Safety Guidelines for Fund-Raising Events

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Breakfasts, lunches and dinners at churches, fire halls and community centers are great ways to raise funds and socialize at the same time. Volunteers who work at fund-raisers need to know how to handle food safely, because food that is mishandled can cause foodborne illness, especially among infants, young children, older adults, pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems.

Foodborne illness, or “food poisoning,” is caused by eating food that is contaminated with disease-causing organisms, most often bacteria. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that approximately 76 million people get sick and 5,000 people die from it each year. Foodborne illness often has flu-like symptoms, but it can be more serious – even fatal.

It is safer to prepare food at the event location as opposed to preparing food at home and bringing it to the event. Either way, volunteers must practice safe food handling to help protect the people they are serving from illness.

## Organizing and Supervising the Event

Start by selecting a reliable person to be in charge of the event. This person should oversee the planning, preparation and cleanup of the event as well as provide an orientation for the volunteers. This person also should check with the local health department to determine if there are any guidelines governing foods served

at fund-raising events and then implement those that apply.



The **Food Safety Checklist** will help keep the planning of your event on track. Make a list of the food, equipment and supplies that will be needed for the event, including cutting boards, utensils, food thermometers, cookware, storage containers, coolers, ice, gel packs, paper towels, etc. Be sure there is adequate refrigerator and freezer space. Check for a source of potable water, or bring water in for cleaning hands and supplies, especially if the event will be held outdoors.

Post kitchen rules on preparing and serving food. Keep the kitchen, appliances and work surfaces clean. Use a solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented, liquid chlorine bleach in 1 gallon of water to sanitize washed surfaces and utensils. Discard food that is old and should not be used in the event. Remove all cleaning fluids and non-food items from food preparation areas so that it does not get into food accidentally.

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# Purchasing and Storing Food for the Event

All food for the event must be inspected. Do not use food that is past the “use-by” or “sell-by” date or foods that have been thawed and refrozen. Do not use meat, poultry or seafood that is in torn or leaking packages. Do not purchase canned goods that are dented, leaking, bulging or rusted as these are warning signs that bacteria may be growing in the cans.

All food should be stored quickly, at least within two hours after purchasing. Keep food out of the “Danger Zone” (between 40° and 140° F). Bacteria multiply rapidly in this zone and can increase to the levels needed to cause foodborne illness. Keep hot foods hot (140° F or warmer) and cold foods cold (40° F or colder). Use an appliance thermometer to make sure the temperature of the refrigerator is 40° F or below, and the freezer is 0° F or below. If there is not enough room in the refrigerator, place food in coolers with ice or frozen gel packs.

Cook fresh poultry, fish and ground meats within two days of purchase, and beef, lamb, pork or veal within three to five days. Use egg, chicken, tuna and macaroni salads that were prepared in the store within three to five days of purchase. Cooked casseroles containing meat and soups and stews containing meat and vegetables can be stored in the refrigerator for three to four days before the event. Fresh shrimp, scallops, crayfish, crabs and oysters are highly perishable and must be used within one to two days.

# Preparing and Serving Food for the Event

Volunteers who have a cold, fever, diarrhea or cough should not prepare or serve food as they can pass germs (pathogens) on to others. Infected wounds, cuts and boils should be covered with bandages. Aprons should be worn, and hair nets or hats must be worn to prevent hair from getting into food.

Wash hands and kitchen surfaces often because bacteria can be spread throughout the kitchen. Wash hands with hot, soapy water for at least 20 seconds prior to handling food and between preparing different foods. Wash cutting boards, utensils and countertops with hot, soapy water too. Avoid cross-contamination; use one cutting board for fresh produce and another for preparing raw meat, poultry and seafood.

The **Food Safety Checklist** will help you keep food safe. Thaw food in the refrigerator or in the microwave immediately before cooking. Marinate food in the refrigerator in a covered, nonmetallic

container. Rinse all fresh fruits and vegetables under running tap water before use. Do not use soap. Scrub thick-skinned produce with a brush.

Never partially cook food for finishing later because this increases the risk of bacterial growth as it keeps food within the “Danger Zone” for too long. Do not use recipes in which eggs remain raw or partially cooked. Eggs should be prepared immediately after breaking. When possible, substitute pasteurized eggs for raw eggs.

Use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature of meat, poultry, casseroles and other food. Check the temperature in several places, and cook all foods according to the recommendations in **Internal Cooking Temperatures** table. Eggs should be cooked until they are firm and no longer runny. Seafood should have an opaque look and flaky texture.

## Internal Cooking Temperatures

Food	Temperature (degrees F)
Eggs and egg dishes	160
Ground turkey, chicken	165
Ground beef, veal, pork, lamb	160
Fresh beef, veal, and lamb steaks, roasts, chops	145
Fresh pork	160
Fresh ham (raw)	160
Fully cooked ham (reheat)	140
All poultry products and stuffing	165
Seafood	145
Casseroles	165

Foods that have been cooked ahead should be reheated to at least 165° F. Use stoves, microwave ovens, convection ovens or double boilers to reheat foods. Reheating leftovers in slow cookers, steam tables or chafing dishes is not recommended because foods stay in the “Danger Zone” too long.

Keep cold food cold (40° F or below) and hot food hot (140° F or higher) when serving the food. Keep food cold in the refrigerator, in coolers or in ice baths on the serving line. Keep hot food in the oven, in heated chafing dishes or in preheated steam tables, warming trays or slow cookers.

Use clean serving containers and utensils. Do not use a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry or seafood unless the plate has been washed in hot, soapy water. When a dish is nearly empty, replace it with a fresh container of food. Serve sauces, salsas and salad dressings either in single portions or in bottles.

Home-canned foods, such as vegetables, chow-chow, relishes and pickles, pose a food safety risk and should not be served at fund-raising events. Cream pies, cream-filled pastries and custards are risky too and should not be prepared at home and brought into the event. Homemade baked goods, such as fruit pies, candies, cakes, cookies and bread, pose little risk and are safe to serve.

Many people have food allergies, particularly to peanuts and dairy products, so foods containing these products may not be the best choices for serving at the event unless there are alternative choices. When

a food contains nuts, note this on an index card and then place the card next to it on the serving line.

## Cleanup After the Event

Discard all perishable foods, such as meat, poultry, eggs and casseroles, left at room temperature longer than two hours, one hour if the temperature is above 90° F. Some exceptions are foods such as cookies, crackers, bread and whole fruit. Immediately refrigerate or freeze remaining leftovers in shallow containers, and label and date the containers. If you are unsure of the safety of the food, throw it out!

## Food Safety Checklist

Event Planning	Completed	Notes
Volunteers trained for event.		
Adequate refrigerator and freezer space (or coolers) on hand.		
Thermometer present in refrigerator(s). Reading is 40° F or below.		
Thermometer present in freezer(s). Reading is 0° F or below.		
Sufficient number of cutting boards and food-grade containers on hand.		
Sufficient number of serving dishes and utensils, warming trays, slow cookers and chafing dishes on hand.		
Source of potable water is available.		
Hand-washing facilities and supplies are available.		
Cleaning detergents, sanitizers, supplies and equipment are on hand and are stored away from food storage and preparation areas.		
Safe food handling rules are posted in the food preparation area(s).		
Food Shopping and Storage	Completed	Notes
No food item is past the "use by," "sell by" or "expiration" date.		
No food packages are leaking or torn.		
No cans of food are dented, leaking, bulging or rusted.		
All cold foods have been stored in the refrigerator.		
All frozen foods have been stored in the freezer.		
Packages of raw poultry, meat and seafood have been stored on trays on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator.		
Shelf-stable foods have been stored on shelves at least 6 inches off the ground.		
Food Preparation and Service	Completed	Notes
Kitchen appliances and work surfaces have been cleaned and sanitized.		
Sanitizing solutions have been prepared within the past 24 hours.		
Food thermometers have been calibrated.		
Volunteers have bandaged all wounds, cuts and boils.		

## Food Safety Checklist

Food Preparation and Service	Completed	Notes
Volunteers are wearing aprons, hair nets/caps and plastic gloves.		
Separate cutting boards for produce and for meat, poultry and fish are available.		
Hot foods have been heated to the recommended temperatures.		
All foods have serving utensils.		
Hot foods have been placed in warming trays, chafing dishes or crockpots.		
Cold foods have been placed in ice baths.		
No home-canned foods are being served.		
Foods containing nuts are labeled appropriately.		
Sauces, salsas and salad dressings are being served in single portions or in bottles.		
Cleanup	Completed	Notes
Discard all perishable foods left at room temperature longer than 2 hours.		
Dispose of all waste in clean and sanitary trash containers.		
Clean and sanitize all appliances and work surfaces.		
Special Chores	Completed	Notes

These guidelines are based on United States Department of Agriculture recommendations and are meant for consumers only. The information does not reflect recommendations in the FDA Food Code or state food codes. Food service personnel should contact their local or state health department for information on the rules and regulations governing retail or institutional settings.

## References

*Cooking for Groups: A Volunteer's Guide to Food Safety.* Food Safety and Inspection Service, United States Department of Agriculture. July 2007. Retrieved March 2009 from <<http://www.fsis.usda.gov>>.

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