

Campsite Cooking

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Arkansas offers an abundance of camping opportunities for outdoor enthusiasts to enjoy its mountains, forests, lakes and rivers. One of the keys to a successful camp-out is food safety. To help ensure food safety when campsite cooking, please keep the following tips in mind:

Practice Food Safety

Always wash your hands before and after touching any raw meats or foods that you plan to cook. Use different cooking utensils for handling raw and cooked meats to avoid cross contamination. Using different colored utensils and cutting boards is a great way to keep things separate. Clean the grill before use to ensure no contamination from the previous user or stray wind-blown debris gets into your food.

Know the Numbers

Cook food thoroughly to a safe internal temperature and check using a food thermometer.

When storing foods, keep cold foods below 40°F and hot foods above 140°F. The 'danger zone' of 40-140°F is where bacteria like to grow, so the less time food is held in that temperature zone, the better. Eat and enjoy your



FOOD	INTERNAL TEMPERATURE
Beef steaks	145°F
Pork steaks	145°F
Fish	145°F
Sausage	160°F
Chicken	165°F
Rabbit	160°F
Venison	160°F

meal, then clean it up and store it properly, keeping cooked and raw foods separate.

If you are in an RV or camper, refrigeration is less of a concern. If camping in a tent, you need to ensure proper refrigeration with coolers and access to ice. Check with your campsite for the nearest convenience store or gas station for ice and other amenities while you are in the area.

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Leave no Footprint

While hiking and camping in nature or a guest in another state, remember to protect the environment.

- Don't litter, even if it's biodegradable. Food leftovers, even an apple core, can habituate local wildlife to human food, so take back what you bring.
- Use reusable containers for water and drinks. Nourishment and hydration are important. Just be sure to keep your campsite clean and litter-free.
- Dispose of trash appropriately. Use public trash cans, but realize that some camp sites will require patrons to bring their own trash receptacle, so come prepared.



Plan Ahead

You can reduce the risk of food spoilage by planning meals and snacks for the number of people in your group. Your goal is to leave the campsite with no unused food.

- Prepare all recipes as far ahead as possible.
- Chop vegetables, measure ingredients, and portion meats ahead of time. This will save you a lot of time while camping and help make your experience less stressful. This strategy also comes in handy when you have limited cooking equipment.
- Pack a meat thermometer or keep one in your vehicle. You never know when the urge to picnic might strike.

Following these guidelines can help ensure your food safety while also protecting Arkansas' natural resources.

References

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