



MT20007HR revised 7-04

Preparing food for fun and profit

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Safe food handling prevents food-borne illnesses that arise from unsafe food handling practices. Designed especially for use by people who prepare food on behalf of nonprofits and other organizations, this publication provides checklists for the safe handling, storage, cooking, and serving of food, and for keeping food preparation areas clean.

MANY NONPROFIT GROUPS prepare food for fun and profit at fairs and banquets and the like. Safety must always be an important goal for such events. Safe food handling will prevent you, your family, friends and customers from acquiring a food-borne illness as a result of unsafe food handling practices. *Remember, 99 percent of food-borne illnesses can be prevented by following safe food handling practices.*

Follow the eight steps set out here for a safe food service event.*

Step 1: Food service review form

Serving food at a temporary event requires organizers, including nonprofit organizations, to complete a food service review form available from county health departments. The form should be obtained at least a week prior to the event. After you've filled out the form, your county sanitarian can help you determine if you need to take the next step and apply for either a *temporary food service license* or a *food purveyor's license*. Nonprofit organizations are initially exempt from licensing fees.

For more information, talk with officials at your county health department.

*The information in this MontGuide is based on Montana Code Annotated (MCA) 50-50-103, 2000.

Step 2: Menu; food sources

Keep your menu simple. Consider the equipment and space for food preparation and service to reduce risk of food-borne illness. Prepare a minimal number of dishes containing potentially hazardous foods such as meats, eggs, dairy products, baked potatoes, and cut fruits and vegetables. Use only food that comes from an approved source such as a grocery store, restaurant supply store, or warehouse. Never use home-canned foods. Use shell eggs that come from farms that meet, at a minimum, Grade B standards.

Step 3: Healthy and clean workers

Healthy food handlers are your best defense against food-borne illness.

Hand-washing setup for temporary food service

You'll need—

- A container with a spigot on the bottom (an urn or a large insulated beverage container) to hold hot water
- Hand soap, preferably liquid, and paper towels
- A container to catch wastewater

Safe hand-washing essentials

Always wash hands away from food preparation areas before handling foods. Wash hands vigorously in hot soapy water for 20 seconds and dry them with a clean paper towel.

Occasions usually requiring only a clean food preparation area

- Such private events as wedding receptions, family reunions, church pot-lucks (for members only) and graduation parties (even if the event is in a public place such as a reception hall or club.

Occasions usually requiring clean food preparation areas and a temporary food service license

- The general rule is that you need a temporary food service license only if the food is to be sold to the public. Examples include church suppers, craft shows, civic celebrations, festivals, county fairs and carnivals.

Workers must be in good health and show no symptoms of any communicable disease. Workers need to wear clean clothing and hair restraints.

Most importantly, they must wash their hands frequently.

Step 4: food preparation

Prepare food on site or in a health department-approved kitchen.

Never prepare or store food that will be used in a temporary food service operation at home. Prepare food on clean, sanitized surfaces with clean, sanitized utensils. Prevent contact between raw and cooked foods. (Juices from raw foods can contaminate cooked and ready-to-eat foods.) Thaw food in the refrigerator or by using another acceptable [*continued on p. 4*]

Checklist for safe food handling

Make it your responsibility to serve safe food!

KEEP IT SAFE

Serve it safe

- Keep hot foods **HOT (135°F or above)**
- Keep cold foods **COLD (40°F or below)**
- Do not serve raw or partially cooked meat, poultry, fish or eggs

Cool it safe

- Divide leftovers into small, shallow containers
- Refrigerate and freeze promptly

Thaw it safe

- Thaw frozen food in a refrigerator, submerged in cool, potable running water, or—if the food will be cooked immediately or if the microwave is part of a cooking procedure—in a microwave
- Never thaw foods at room temperature

Keep it separate: Keep...

- Tasting spoons from stirring spoons
- Raw meat from cooked or ready-to-eat foods
- Utensils and dishes used in handling raw foods from serving utensils and dishes

Food preparation

- Food must be prepared in the booth or in a health department–approved kitchen
- Food must be prepared in the back of the booth or away from the public
- Re-heated foods not used by closing time must be discarded
- Avoid using precooked foods or leftovers. Always cook to order.
- Fruits and vegetables should be thoroughly washed.
- Cool food to **40°F** within six hours by using an ice bath and stirring the food often, or by placing the food in shallow pans—pans no more than four inches deep—and refrigerating it.

Food must reach **70°F** within the first two hours, then drop from **70° to 40°** within the last four hours.

KEEP IT CLEAN

Food service workers—

- Must be healthy and their hands must be free of cuts and sores
- Must wear clean clothing and such hair restraints as hats or nets
- Must wear plastic gloves when serving food in direct contact, like a dinner roll or piece of fruit, unless serving utensils are used
- Must wear no excessive jewelry, no artificial nails, no nail polish

Wash your hands thoroughly—after...

- using the bathroom
- handling raw foods and especially meats
- picking up anything from the floor/ground
- coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose
- smoking, eating or drinking

and always before...

- handling food!

How thorough is thorough?

- Wash vigorously in hot water with soap for 20 seconds
- dry with a clean paper towel

Sanitize all surfaces before use and frequently during use

- countertops and equipment
- cutting boards
- scrubbers and brushes

Sanitizing solutions

- Add 1 tablespoon of household chlorine bleach to 1 gallon of water—water between **75°F and 120°F**. (This makes a solution of about 100ppm.)
- Other approved sanitizing solutions include iodine (25ppm) or QAC [quaternary ammonium compounds] (200ppm)

Checklist for temporary food service—fairs, church suppers, banquets, etc.

Make it your responsibility to serve safe food!

- A temporary food service license is needed where operation is at a fixed location for a single event. (Nonprofits that operate less than 14 days per year may be exempt from obtaining a state license. Check with your county health department.)
- Plan a limited menu with as few potentially hazardous foods as possible
- **Do not serve farm eggs or home-canned foods or any other foods prepared at home!**

CLEANLINESS TIPS

Sanitizing

- Clean wipes kept in a bucket of clean water with dilute bleach solution (100ppm)
- Spray bottle containing dilute bleach solution
- Sanitize thermometers, surfaces, utensils

Handwashing

- Hot water, preferably running water
- Handwashing sink or a large container
- Soap (preferably liquid)
- Paper towels

Dishwashing in Five Steps

You'll need a three-compartment sink or three large tubs set up side by side.

1. Scrape pots and pans.
2. In the first compartment of the sink or in the first tub, wash in hot soapy water.
3. In the second, rinse in hot water.
4. In the third, sanitize in a solution of 1 tablespoon of bleach per gallon of warm water (100ppm). **Do not mix bleach and detergent.**
5. Air-dry everything on a clean drying rack. **Do not dry with towels**

Prevent contamination

- Use tables and shelves to keep all food and ingredients at least six inches off the ground
- Keep raw meat, poultry and seafood and their juices away from all other food
- Store food only in clean and sanitized food-grade containers.

Trash

- Use plastic or metal containers with liners and covers
- Empty trash containers frequently. Clean them before storing for another use.

FOOD TEMPERATURE DANGER ZONE

is between 40° and 135° F

Keep food in this range for no more than four hours!

THERMOMETERS

- Use bimetallic stemmed or digital thermometers capable of measuring 0°–210°F
- Clean and sanitize thermometers beforehand
- Calibrate thermometers frequently

KEEP COLD FOODS COLD

- The holding range for cold foods is **40°F or lower**
- The holding range for frozen foods is **0°F to –10°F**
- Use a refrigerator or an ice chest with a drain, and ice from an approved source—not ice from home

KEEP HOT FOODS HOT

- The holding range for cooked foods is **135°F or higher. See chart below.**
- To cook foods, use electric, gas or propane stoves or covered grills
- In reheating foods, it is necessary to bring the food to **165°F** within two hours
- Steam tables or Sterno with windbreaks can be used only for hot-holding, not reheating, food

HOT COOKED FOOD SAFETY

MINIMAL INTERNAL TEMPERATURES*

| DISH— | TEMPERATURE (degrees F) | MINIMUM TIME (in seconds unless stated) |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Microwaved foods | 165 | let stand for 2 min. |
| Reheated foods | 165 | 15 |
| Poultry | 165 | 15 |
| Casseroles, stuffed meat, stuffing | 165 | 15 |
| Ground meats | 155 | 15 |
| Eggs | 145 | 15 |
| Roasts—beef, pork, ham, lamb | 130..... minimum 145..... minimum | 121 min. 3 min. |
| Steaks—beef, veal, lamb, pork | 145 | 15 |
| Wild game meats | 145 | 15 |
| Fish & shellfish | 145 | 15 |

*The temperatures and times in this table are based on Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM)-37.110, subchapter 2, 2000.

[continued from p. 1] acceptable method (see checklists, pp. 2 and 3), never at room temperature. Discard any food left out at room temperature for more than four hours.

Step 5: Cooking food and keeping it hot

Foods must be cooked to the appropriate temperature to destroy harmful bacteria; see checklist for safe cooking temperatures on p. 3. And you must maintain food at a safe temperature at all times.

Besides using a range, hot holding temperatures can also be maintained by using a camping stove, propane gas grill, Sterno (with a windbreak) or a charcoal grill. Use a clean and sanitized food thermometer to check on cooking as well as hot and cold holding temperatures of potentially hazardous foods. Reheat foods to 165°F within two hours. Do not reheat foods in crock pots, steam tables or other hold holding devices, or over Sterno. Plan for emergencies. Have backup plans ready to implement in case you lose electricity.

Step 6: Cooling food and keeping food cold

For cold foods, use a refrigerator or refrigerated truck that will keep air temperatures at 40°F or colder. Ice may be used if—

- It comes from an approved source. *Never bring ice from home; it could be contaminated.*
- All food immersed in the ice is stored in sealed watertight containers.
- Ice used to cool beverage cans and bottles is not served to the public.
- The spigot of the ice container is left open so that it drains continuously.
- A catch-bucket for the meltwater is provided.

Step 7: Cleaning and sanitizing food preparation areas and dishes

If one is available, use a commercial dishwasher. If it isn't, wash equipment and utensils in a three-compartment sink (or three large tubs) employing this five-step sanitizing process:

- Rinse, scrape or soak all items
- Wash with hot soapy water in Sink or Compartment No. 1
- Rinse all soap off with hot water in Sink or Compartment No. 2
- Chemically sanitize by complete immersion in a sanitizing solution in Sink or Compartment No. 3 for at least one minute. One such solution is 1/2 tablespoon of household chlorine bleach per gallon of warm (not hot!) water; this works out to 50ppm of chlorine.
- Air-dry on a clean drying rack. *Do not dry with a towel.*

Dirty items will attract flies and other insects. If it is impracticable to wash and sanitize dirty equipment and utensils on site, store these items in a large covered container and wash, rinse and sanitize them back at an approved dishwashing site.

Sanitize food preparation and serving areas frequently

Mix 1 tablespoon of household chlorine bleach with 1 gallon warm (not hot!) water. Store the mixture in a spray bottle. Change this bleach solution every other day. Wash and rinse the surface, spray with sanitizing solution, spread the solution over the surface with a clean paper towel, and allow to air-dry. *Do not rinse.*

Rinse and store wiping cloths in a bucket of sanitizer (for example, one tablespoon of household chlorine bleach in one gallon of water). Change the soaking solution if it becomes

dirty, if its temperature falls to 75,° or if the chlorine drops to less than 50ppm.

If an approved water source is not available, then provide enough potable water for the needs of the temporary food service operation. *Use only food-grade hoses—not home garden hoses.* Food-grade hoses, which are usually white in color, are available at many hardware and restaurant supply stores. Chlorinate the hoses before using them by immersing them in a tub big enough to hold the hoses, water, and one to two cups of bleach. Immerse the hose in the tub for at least one minute. After removing the hose, run water from an approved source through it for at least five minutes.

Step 8: Protect food from contamination

- Keep food and supplies at least six inches off the ground
- Keep foods covered with plastic wrap, aluminum foil or lids
- Keep foods and supplies in their original packaging
- Store pesticides away from food and supplies. **Follow the pesticide container label instructions closely for pesticide application, handling and disposal.**
- Place garbage and paper wastes in refuse containers fitted with plastic liners and tight lids.
- Dispose of wastewater in a sewer or public toilet.



go to

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Questions? Get in touch with your local registered sanitarian or county Extension agent or meat inspector.

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File under: Foods
E-1 (Food Safety)
Revised June 2004
2000 0704 SF