



University of California
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TIPS FOR TAILGATING FOOD SAFETY

Don't give bacteria a sporting chance at your football tailgate (or any other festive) gathering in the weeks ahead. The U.S. Department of Agriculture reminds consumers that although tailgating is a cool weather activity in most areas of the country, it still requires the same safe food handling practices as summer picnicking. It takes a good defense to keep harmful foodborne bacteria from sending guests to the locker room.

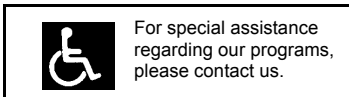
There's nothing more American than tailgating and football. Food and football have long been paired for fall festivities. In fact, "gridiron" -- the nickname for the football field -- comes from a grate used for grilling food. Keeping food safe at parties takes a team effort. Throughout food preparation and serving, the Partnership for Food Safety Education's Fight BAC!® Campaign advises consumers to:

- Clean:** Clean the food thermometer after use and use clean serving plates, utensils, etc.
- Separate:** Separate raw meat and poultry from cooked foods to avoid cross-contamination.
- Cook:** Raw meat and poultry need to be cooked thoroughly.
- Chill:** Store leftovers in the cooler within 2 hours of taking food off of the grill. When the temperature is above 90° F, store food in a cooler within 1 hour.

The Game Plan

Include lots of clean utensils, not only for eating but also for serving the safely cooked food. In addition to a grill and fuel for cooking food, pack a food thermometer to be sure the meat; poultry, and casseroles reach a high enough temperature to destroy harmful bacteria that may be present.

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Keep hot food hot. If bringing hot take-out food, eat it within 2 hours of purchase. Keep hot foods hot by storing in insulated containers. Keep cold foods cold by storing in a cooler with lots of ice. When packing the cooler for an outing, be sure raw meat and poultry are wrapped securely to prevent their juices from cross-contaminating ready-to-eat food. Bring along water for cleaning and pack clean, wet, disposable cloths or moist towelettes and paper towels for cleaning hands and surfaces.

The Play-by-Play

Bacteria multiply rapidly between 40° F and 140° F. Never leave food in this "danger zone" more than 2 hours (1 hour when the outside temperature is above 90° F). Cook meat and poultry completely and never partially cook meat ahead of time. Use a food thermometer to be sure that foods are cooked thoroughly. Be sure that ground meat patties reach an internal temperature of 160° F for beef, lamb and pork and 165° F for ground poultry. Beef, veal and lamb steaks and roasts may be cooked to at least 145° F for medium rare. Poultry breast meat should be cooked to 170° F and dark meat to 180° F. All cuts of pork should reach 160° F.

The Wrap-Up

Some people have so much fun at tailgate gatherings, they never actually make it into the stadium to see the football game. Store food in the cooler except for brief times when serving. Cook only the amount of food that will be eaten to avoid the challenge of keeping leftovers at a safe temperature. Discard any leftovers that are not ice cold after the game. Food should not be left out of the cooler or off the grill more than 2 hours (1 hour when the outside temperature is above 90° F).

Source: USDA FSIS News Release by Jimmy C. Liu -- <http://www.nal.usda.gov/foodborne>

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