



HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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NUMBER: 16-05
FOR RELEASE: IMMEDIATE

DATE: May 25, 2016
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MEMORIAL DAY FOOD SAFETY

STANISLAUS COUNTY – Memorial Day marks the unofficial start of summer! Picnics and barbeques often top the list of activities for the long holiday weekend. Remember, as temperatures rise special precautions must be taken when preparing and serving food and officials from the Health Services Agency and the Department of Environmental Resources urge the public to take some simple steps to avoid foodborne illnesses as the season begins.

Bacteria can grow quickly if food is left sitting out and heating up in summer temperatures. Senior Environmental Health Specialist, Kit McClurg, from the Department of Environmental Resources notes, “It’s important to take extra precautions and practice safe food handling when preparing, transporting and serving perishable items from raw meat products to potato salad, especially during the summer months.” She offers the following tips to help Stanislaus County residents reduce their risk of foodborne illness this summer.

Quick Tips for Picnic Site Preparation

Food safety begins with proper cleaning. Before you begin setting out your picnic feast, make sure hands *and* surfaces are clean.

1. **Outdoor Hand Cleaning** - If you don’t have access to running water, simply use a water jug with a spigot, some soap, and paper towels.
2. **Display Food on Ice** - Foods like chicken salad and desserts in individual serving dishes can be placed deeply into ice making sure the ice level matches the food level in each container when presented on serving tables. Drain off water as ice melts and replace ice frequently.
3. **Marinating Mandate** - Always marinate food in the refrigerator. Do not re-use sauce that was used to marinate raw meat, poultry, or fish on cooked food. Set aside some of the marinade before adding the meat if you want to use it as sauce later on the cooked food.
4. **Where's the Beef? Chicken and Fish?** - Hamburgers should be cooked to 160 °F, while large cuts of beef such as London Broil and steaks may be cooked to 145 °F for medium rare or to 160 °F for medium. Poultry must reach a temperature of 165 °F. Fish should be opaque and flake easily. Be sure to use a food thermometer to check for the safe internal temperature. Remember to wash the food thermometer well in between uses.
5. **Stay Away from that Same Old Plate** - When taking foods off the grill, do not put cooked food items back on the same plate that held raw food, unless it has been washed with hot, soapy water first.
6. **Chill Out** - Don’t let perishable food sit out longer than two hours, and be sure to throw away any leftovers that have been out for more than two hours. In hot weather (above 90°F), foods should never be out for more than one hour before being refrigerated.
7. **Ice Chest Etiquette** - A full cooler will maintain its cold temperatures longer than one that is partially filled so it is important to pack plenty of extra ice (block ice works best) to ensure a constant cold temperature. Keep the cooler out of the direct sun.

For more helpful consumer hints for eating outdoors and handling foods safely please visit the CDC website at: <http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/communication/bbq-ig.html>, or call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at (888) 674-6854. Local assistance is available by calling the Department of Environmental Resources at (209) 525-6700 Monday through Friday 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

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