

NEWS RELEASE

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North Dakota Department of Health Offers Food Safety Tips for July Fourth Weekend

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) reminds residents that proper food handling and preparation can help prevent foodborne illness. Each year one out of six Americans get sick from contaminated foods or beverages according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Key recommendations for safe food handling and preparation include washing hands and surfaces often and using a food thermometer to ensure meat, poultry, seafood and other items are thoroughly cooked.

“This upcoming Fourth of July, the North Dakota Department of Health would like to offer a few additional tips to help keep friends and family safe from foodborne illness,” said Laura Cronquist, an epidemiologist with the NDDoH. “Holiday weekends are a time when many people enjoy barbecues, picnics or meals around a campfire. Following these tips will help keep your Fourth of July weekend a reason to celebrate.”

- **KEEP IT HOT, HOT, HOT!**

Hot perishable foods, such as casseroles and meats, left out at room temperature may become unsafe within two hours. In temperatures higher than 90°F, food may become unsafe in just one hour. Food that has been cooked and left sitting out for several hours should not be eaten. Cooked foods either need to be kept hot at 140°F or above, or chilled at 40°F or below. Use the grill and warming trays to keep food warm while serving. Leftovers should be stored in clean, shallow containers to allow them to chill faster.

- **IF IT COMES FROM THE GROUND, SCRUB IT DOWN**

Wash all fruits and vegetables before eating. Scrub fruits with rinds, such as watermelon and cantaloupe, with clean water and a food brush before slicing. Bacteria can transfer from the knife on the outside of the fruit and contaminate the flesh of the fruit. Use clean knives and cutting boards. Do not wash raw meat and poultry, as this practice can spread bacteria.

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- **CHILL OUT**

Bacteria can grow and multiply in food that is not properly chilled. Sliced fruits and vegetables, cold salads, deli meat and other cold perishable foods should not be kept at room temperature for more than two hours. Meals served outside in temperatures higher than 90°F should not be left out for more than one hour. During summer picnics, use an insulated cooler filled with ice or frozen gel packs to keep food cold.

- **TWO IS BETTER THAN ONE**

A common mistake backyard chefs make is serving cooked food on the same plate that was used to transport the raw meat or poultry from the kitchen to the grill. Cross-contamination also can occur when vegetables or other uncooked foods come into contact with cutting boards, plates and utensils that were used for raw meat and poultry products. Keep it safe by using two plates – one for raw foods and one for cooked foods.

- **MARINADE DONE RIGHT**

Sauces and marinades used on raw meat or poultry should never be reused on cooked foods. Bacteria from the raw meat can grow in the reused marinade and make people sick. Prepare a fresh batch of marinade for use as a dipping sauce or for basting cooked foods. Always marinate meat and poultry in the refrigerator. At room temperature, bacteria on raw meat and poultry can double in number every 20 minutes. Thaw meat and poultry in the refrigerator, cold water or the microwave – never on the counter.

For more information about food safety or to report a possible foodborne illness, contact Laura Cronquist at lcronquist@nd.gov, 800.472.2180 or 701.328.2378.

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