

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Have a Safe and Happy Fourth of July!

Yippee! Fourth of July! Time for burgers at the beach, picnics in the park, and fireworks after dark. But please, in with all the fun, pay attention to some food safety pointers, so you're not sick after the holidays. There are really only a few important things to remember so it's not that hard to protect yourself and your family.

First thing, especially here in Florida, is to keep foods COLD. That means if you're eating outside the house, whether in the backyard or at the beach, you'll need ice. You know of course that meat, chicken, fish, hot dogs and lunchmeats need to be kept cold. Anything more than 2 hours out of the refrigerator and not on ice is asking for problems.

It's a good idea to marinate meat that will be grilled. Using an acidic marinade, something that contains vinegar, wine or lemon juice will not only tenderize the meat. It will help prevent some kinds of cancer-causing compounds from forming when the meat is grilled. Be sure to keep the meat cold while it is marinating. If you want to use the same mixture as a sauce for serving, set some aside before you add the meat. Do not use liquid that had raw meat in it as a sauce for the cooked meat.

There are other foods that need the cold. Salads are in this group. It's not just potato salad either. Leafy green salad veggies can carry bacteria and let them grow if they're not cold. There have been outbreaks of food poisoning traced to plates of sliced tomato salads and dishes of fruit salad. Sliced watermelon and cantaloupe are also

risky. All cut, peeled or chopped fruits and vegetables must be kept cold to be safe. The alternative is to throw them out after 2 hours.

Boiled eggs must be kept refrigerated. Whether in the shell or dressed up as deviled eggs, they are still good food for bacteria. Keep them cold to keep them safe. Throw away any that have been out in the heat for more than 2 hours.

Another short, easy food safety rule to remember is HOT. Keep hot foods hot. Cook foods to the right temperature. An essential part of a picnic or barbeque tool kit has to be a meat thermometer. You can get a simple one for under \$10, or spend close to \$100 for a super-fancy version. Digital thermometers only need the tip of the spike in the meat to be accurate. Cooking is the only way you have at home to be sure you're killing off any bacteria that might have landed on your meat.

Here are your safe temperatures: **Steaks, roasts and other cuts of beef, as well as veal and lamb - 145° F. Pork chops and roasts - 160° F. Poultry, whole or parts - 165° F. All ground beef (burgers), pork or veal - 160° F. Ground turkey or chicken, and anything with stuffing (stuffed pork chops, etc) - 165° F.** Of course you can cook meats to a higher temperature if you want the piece more well done, but with these temperatures you'll be sure you're safe.

You can now get disposable, single-use plastic thermometers for beef, pork, poultry and fish. Each is set for the right temperature for that food. The tip of the thermometer turns color when the food is hot enough. Look for them in your grocery.

The last two rules for safe food are CLEAN and SEPARATE. Use clean plates for each different food. Don't put cooked meat back on the plate you used to carry the raw meat to the grill. Use separate knives and boards for cutting meats and veggies.

Wash your hands every time you handle food, before and after. If there's no water nearby, take hand sanitizer gel along. It's not as good as soap and water, but it's better than no washing at all.

Finally, if you can't get the leftovers on ice or back in the refrigerator within 2 hours, be prepared to throw them away. Don't think of it as wasted food, think of it as saving a few trips to the emergency room or doctor's office. Who wants to waste money or spoil the 4th with that?

Here's a delicious fruit punch to serve at the party. Freeze some of the fruit juice beforehand, to keep the punch cool later, or have plenty of ice on hand. Be sure to wash the fruit before you slice it.

Mint Citrus Punch

3 1/2 C pineapple juice	3 C orange juice (fresh squeezed is best)
1 1/2 C lemon juice	1/2 C lime juice
1 1/2 C sugar or sweetener	20 mint leaves
1 liter bottle ginger ale chilled	1 liter bottle seltzer chilled

In large jug combine pineapple, orange and 1/2 C lemon juice. Freeze rest of lemon and lime juice to ice the punch later. Add sugar or sweetener and mint leaves to juice, crush leaves and stir until sugar dissolves. Cover and refrigerate at least 4 hours. To serve, remove mint leaves. Pour juices, ginger ale and seltzer into large container. Add frozen juices. Garnish with sliced oranges, lemons, limes or mint leaves. Serves 20.