

Food Safety:

From your kitchen to your dinner table, church gathering, or family potluck

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The Medina County Health Department's Food Programs is responsible for licensing and inspecting local food service operations (restaurants, mobile, vending, and temporary) and retail food establishments (grocery stores, convenience stores). There is one "restaurant" that we do not inspect – your private home kitchen. The following can help protect your health and those you feed.

Remember the following: Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill.

Clean: Wash hands and surfaces often. Bacteria can spread throughout the kitchen and get onto cutting boards, utensils, and counter tops.

Separate: Don't cross-contaminate. Always use a clean cutting board, and use one board for fresh produce and a separate one for raw meat, poultry, and seafood. Wash hands and surfaces thoroughly after contact with raw meats. Store raw meats separate from cooked or ready-to-eat foods, deli salads, etc.

Cook: Cook food thoroughly to proper temperatures. When you serve food, keep cold food cold and hot food hot. Cold foods should stay at or below 40°F. After cooking, hot foods should stay at or above 140°F.

Chill: Refrigerate promptly. Discard any perishable foods, such as meat, poultry, eggs, and casseroles left at room temperature longer than two hours. Immediately refrigerate or freeze remaining leftovers in shallow containers.

Special consideration should be given to potlucks, family gatherings, or picnics when several people are providing food to share. The best thing to do is plan ahead for safe and fun potlucks:

- Select a reliable person to be in charge. This person can contact the Medina County Health Department, Food Programs staff at 330-723-9523 for helpful resources and information.
- Plan ahead. Make sure the right equipment, including cutting boards, utensils, food thermometers, soap, and paper towels are available. Consider electrical power needs for crock pots, roasters, etc. Consider serving shelf-stable desserts.
- For outdoor events, make sure you have a source of clean water.
- Have plenty of storage space in refrigerators, freezers, or coolers. Avoid over-stocking to allow adequate cold air flow.

A FREE booklet, *Cooking for Groups*, is available for churches, civic groups, or individuals planning a gathering. Other food safety tip sheets and information is also available by calling the Medina County Health Department, Food Programs staff, at 330-723-9523, toll-free at 1-888-723-9688, by emailing env@medinahealth.org, or by going to our website, www.medinahealth.org.