

FN-SSB.101

OCCASIONAL COOKING FOR A CROWD

Many organizations rely on volunteers to raise funds, and these activities often involve handling food. If you've volunteered to prepare, serve, or handle food at a banquet, church supper, pancake breakfast, community kitchen, festival booth, community bake sale, or family reunion, it's important to learn how to protect yourself and the crowd you are about to feed. Since the preparation of foods in a home kitchen or any other establishment not subject to a local health department inspection is prohibited at these types of events, it is important to know about any local requirements. Armed with a little safe food handling knowledge and the proper permits, the occasional cook can safely prepare food and make a profit for the organization.



HEALTH DEPARTMENT PERMITS

If your organization does not have access to a commercial foodservice kitchen or restaurant and your group is going to sell food to the public for a short period, you should call your local health department to find out its requirements. Likely you will need a temporary food service permit. A temporary food service permit is required for preparing and serving food or drinks to the public, including samples. Contact your local health department no less than two days before the event. You should complete a Temporary Foodservice Registration Form that includes the type of foodservice proposed, a food list including the method of storage and how the correct temperature of coolers, refrigerators, hot boxes, etc., will be maintained, and the time and location of the event. The local health department will inspect the temporary event on the day it will occur. If minimum sanitation standards are not met, the health department

will discontinue the foodservice operation until it verifies corrections are made. As of 2022, the health department in Kentucky does charge a fee, depending on the length of your event. Calling ahead is always your best course of action and will allow the event to go off without food sanitation and permit issues.

PLANNING

The type of menus you select and the recipes you use should be based on many factors. Consider safe food handling procedures, equipment and space available, labor and time, expected profit, season, occasion and group, the number of people being served, type of service, and standardized quantity recipes. Select a committee to consider these issues. Keeping good records to manage the event and planning for future events will help eliminate problems. Beware of cutting corners to increase profit, as doing so may affect food safety.

TO PREVENT FOODBORNE ILLNESS

Following proper cooking, holding, and cooling temperatures and times are of utmost importance. There are limits to how long hot or cold food can be transported or held safely in coolers. Use only a sturdy, insulated cooler or thermos. Pack cold food with plenty of ice or frozen gel packs. To avoid cross-contamination, wrap foods well and store raw food separately from ready-to-eat-foods. Perishable foods should not reach a temperature above 41 degrees F for more than two hours. When the outside temperature is 90 degrees F or higher, discard food after one hour. Keep delivered food hot or cold.

Keep food at 135 degrees F or hotter until served. If an oven or stove is not available, use a camping stove, propane gas grill, canned heat fuel surrounded by a strip of foil to act as a windbreak, or a charcoal grill. Have a thermometer handy that you can easily clean – and use it! When you must cook ahead, cook the food completely and refrigerate immediately. Then pack it in a cooler with ice. Reheat the food quickly to 165 degrees F on the grill. Improper cooling is one of the most common causes of foodborne illness. If your group is preparing large quantities of food, such as lasagna, barbecue, or roasts, in advance, cool the food rapidly in small, shallow containers. Slice roasts and whole turkeys into portion sizes and refrigerate or freeze in pans or platters. Items such as barbecue, chili, or stews should be cooled in shallow pans.

Keep food 41 degrees F or colder until served. If a refrigerator or refrigerated truck that will keep the air temperature at 41 degrees F or colder is not available, use commercially prepared ice. Have an adequate supply of ice on hand. Use separate insulated coolers for holding raw foods, cooked food, prepared chilled foods, and beverages. Cover coolers with blankets and place them in the shade to help hold the cold temperature. Consider food safety as part of the normal routine of the occasional cook. The profit and the reputation of the organization you are trying to help may depend on your attention to food safety details!



SAFE COOKING TEMPERATURES

Food Minimum Internal Temperature

Beef, Pork, Veal and Lamb (steaks, chops, or roasts)

145 degrees F with a 3 minute rest time

Seafood (fish, shellfish, or crustaceans)

145 degrees F

Ground Meats (beef, pork, veal, lamb)

160 degrees F

Poultry (whole or ground chicken, turkey, or duck; stuffed meat, seafood, poultry, or pasta)

165 degrees F

Eggs

Cook until white and yolk are firm

Egg dishes (frittata, quiche)

160 degrees F

Casseroles and Leftovers

165 degrees F

Plant, fruit, vegetables, grain, and legumes

135 degrees

Steps of Hand Washing



Rinse hand



Use soap



Palm to palm



Finger interlaced



Back to hands



Base of thumbs



Fingernails



Wrist

PERSONAL HYGIENE

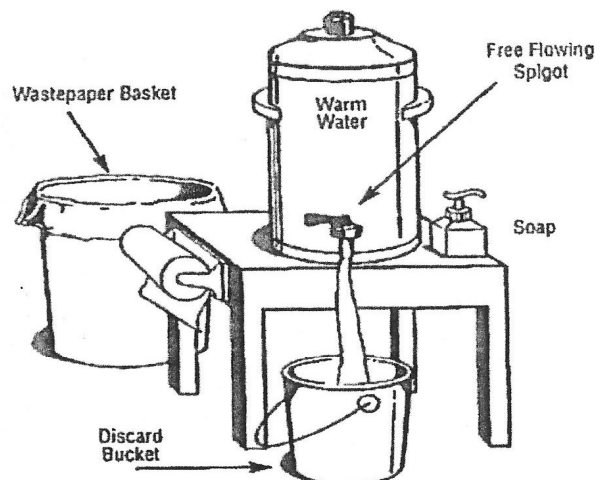
Besides washing hands thoroughly, the occasional cook should practice other good person hygiene. That includes wearing clean clothing and a clean apron, wearing gloves when handling foods that will not be cooked, keeping hair tied back and covered with a head covering, not chewing tobacco, smoking, eating, or drinking while working with food, not serving food when ill, and not coughing or sneezing on food. Most of personal hygiene is common sense.

For additional and the most up-to-date food safety and sanitation guidelines, read LFUCG Temporary Foodservice Guidelines <https://lexingtonhealthdepartment.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/LFCHD-Temporary-Food-Service-2-2017-3.pdf>. Note: Sometimes, you will find different temperatures and times in government agency materials about food safety. This is because some states adopt different food codes. Presently, Kentucky has adopted the FDA 2013 Food Code. Because all Kentucky foodservice organizations must adhere to these requirements, all information presented here follows the 2013 Food Code.

CLEANLINESS

Besides washing produce and cooking foods to their proper temperatures, you should have a location for washing hands and utensils. Hand-washing is the single most effective

action in preventing the spread of disease-causing bacteria. Wash your hands thoroughly before handling food and between jobs. Use soap and water. Scrub for at least 30 seconds. To set up a temporary hand-washing location, place drinkable water in a large, insulated drink container with a spigot. You will need liquid soap and paper towels, a container to catch the wastewater, and a trash can with a lid for used paper towels. Keep extra garbage cans with plastic liners and lids available to prevent garbage overflow. You should have access to a dumpster so you can empty cans frequently. Your temporary hand-washing station might look something like the following illustration, compliments of the Lexington Fayette County Health Department.



The health department requires a three-compartment sink for a temporary foodservice event for washing, rinsing, and sanitizing utensils and equipment. You can set up a mock three-compartment sink by using three large tubs. Wash with warm, soapy water in compartment one; rinse off the soap in compartment two; and immerse utensils completely, for at least one minute, in a sanitizing solution in compartment three. Allow the utensils to air-dry on a clean rack. Change the water frequently. Wash, rinse, and sanitize all equipment, grills, and utensils before and after the event. Use the appropriate solution of quaternary ammonia or diluted unscented bleach (two tablespoons of bleach per gallon of warm water) to sanitize. Store sanitizing solution in a spray bottle to disinfect food preparation surfaces. Clean the surface first with warm, soapy water. Then spray the surface with sanitizing solution, spread the solution over the surface with a clean paper towel, and air-dry. The following diagram, compliments of the Virginia Department of Health, illustrates a possible set-up.



If water is not available, store dirty utensils, dishware, and cooking equipment in a large, covered container to prevent the attraction

of flies and other insects. Then, transport the container to a location where a dishwasher or three-compartment sink is available. If this activity is conducted at an approved, remotely located commissary or foodservice establishment, maintain an adequate supply of spare preparation and serving utensils on the premises in case the original utensils become unclean. Check with your local health department for additional suggestions.

REFERENCES

Centers for Disease Control (March 2022). When and How to Wash Your Hands. <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>, accessed May 2022.

FDA (2013). Food Code 2013. <https://www.fda.gov/food/fda-food-code/food-code-2013#:~:text=The%20Food%20Code%20is%20a,retail%20and%20in%20food%20service.,> accessed May 2022.

USDA FSIS (October 2020). How Temperatures Affect Foods. <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/how-temperatures-affect-food>, accessed May 2022.

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