May 6, 2015

Release Date: May 13, 2015

Deborah Rhoades, MA, RD, FAND
Extension Educator, Family & Consumer Sciences

PICNIC SEASON IS HERE!

Memorial Day Weekend marks, not only the opening of area swimming pools, but the beginning of the entire summer recreational season. What family get-together wouldn’t include refreshments? So, it’s time for packing picnics. Here are some tips to keep food safe when you’re on the go. Regardless of your choice of picnic foods. Think “Food Safety”!

PLAN AHEAD

• Take only the amounts of food you’ll use. You really don’t want leftovers that would require refrigeration. So take what you need, and eat what you take.
• With a proper cooler and ice, most foods are safe for short periods of time.
• Make several sandwiches at one time. Wrap each one by itself. Put all the wrapped sandwiches in a big plastic bag and freeze them. Simple sandwiches freeze best. Try using peanut butter, cheese, sliced meat, or poultry.
• If you do not have a cooler, take fresh, canned or dried fruits, raw vegetables, hard cheese, canned or dried meats or fish, dry cereal, bread, peanut butter, crackers, or cookies.

PACKING POINTERS

• Start with cold food – pack right from the refrigerator or freezer.
• Pack all food in clean plastic wrap or sandwich bags.
• Use an insulated cooler if you have one.
• Include a cold source in the cooler or picnic basket, such as:
  o Commercial ice packs or make your own: place ice cubes in a plastic bag, then wrap the bag in foil.
  o Make sandwiches ahead and freeze them – place frozen sandwiches in the cooler or bag, sandwiches will thaw by lunchtime. (Place lettuce, tomato, and mayonnaise in separate containers; add them to sandwiches just before eating)
  o Freeze small cans or boxes of juice, yogurt, or applesauce – they will thaw by lunchtime.
  o Frozen foods such as hamburgers can serve as a short term cold source. Wrap it so that NO JUICES leak as the meat begins to thaw.
  o Cold fruit

• Pack cold infant formula in an insulated cooler with a source to keep it cold.
• Keep hot foods hot with a thermos or insulated dish.
**AT THE PICNIC**
- Keep the cooler in the shade – don’t leave it in direct sunlight or in the trunk of the car.
- Keep the lid on the cooler – avoid frequent openings.
- Add more ice if it begins to melt.
- In hot weather, food should not sit out for more than an hour. USDA 2-Hour Food Safety Rule states that perishable food should not be kept at room temperature longer than 2 hours.
- Serve food quickly from the cooler.
- Serve small portions so the food doesn’t stay out of the cooler too long.

If you plan to prepare food at the site:
- Keep food cold until you’re ready to grill it.
- Cook food completely at the picnic site – no partial cooking ahead.
- Cook food thoroughly – pack your meat thermometer.
- Fish should flake with a fork.
- Use a clean plate to serve cooked food.
- Be careful that raw meat juices don’t touch other foods. Avoid cross contamination.


Select your favorite meat items for your picnic or grab a bucket of chicken and enjoy with the recipes below!

**FRUITED SPINACH-PASTA SALAD**

3 cups uncooked pasta
4 cups fresh spinach leaves, stemmed and chopped
4 oranges, peeled and sectioned
1/2 cup coarsely chopped red onion
1 (6-ounce) can frozen orange juice concentrate, thawed
1/2 cup low-fat mayonnaise
1 tablespoon paprika

Cook pasta according to package directions, omitting salt and fat; drain. Combine pasta and next 3 ingredients in a bowl; toss gently. Combine concentrate, mayonnaise, and paprika; stir with a wire whisk. Pour over pasta; toss. Makes 7 (1 cup) servings.

**CORN RELISH**

1 1/2 cups fresh, canned (drained), or frozen (thawed) corn
1 red pepper, seeded and chopped
1 green pepper, seeded and chopped
1/2 medium onion, chopped
2 stalks celery, chopped
2 tablespoons canola or vegetable oil
1/3 cup granulated sugar
1/2 cup white vinegar
White pepper to taste

Combine corn, red and green pepper, onion and celery in a medium bowl. In a small saucepan, combine the oil, sugar and vinegar. Heat the mixture until the sugar dissolves, stirring frequently. Pour the oil and vinegar mixture over the corn mixture and mix thoroughly. Season with white pepper to taste. Cover and refrigerate until well chilled.

FRUIT KABOBS OR SALAD WITH YOGURT FRUIT DIP

*Kabobs:* Any type of fresh fruit to spear on a skewer – pineapple, grapes, cherries, strawberries OR try something new!

*Salad:* Any type of fresh fruit – above fruit & apple, blueberries, kiwi, mango, etc.

*Dip:* 1/2 cup plain yogurt and 2 tablespoons unsweetened orange or apple juice concentrate

In a small bowl, mix yogurt with juice concentrate. Dip fruit chunks on toothpicks/skewers into mixture.

For more information about the University of Maryland Extension Frederick County Office check out our website http://extension.umd.edu/frederick-county

University of Maryland Extension programs are open to all persons and will not discriminate against anyone because of race, age, sex, color, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, religion, ancestry, or national origin, marital status, genetic information, or political affiliation, or gender identity and expression.

Deborah Rhoades, MA, RD, FAND, is a licensed Registered Dietitian, Fellow of the Academy of Nutrition Dietetics, and Extension Educator in Family and Consumer Sciences.

DHR:ls