Food safety expert shares tips for fair season

Washing hands regularly is important for vendors, attendees

MANHATTAN, Kan. – Fair season in Kansas also means food season, and a Kansas State University food scientist encourages common sense to keep the party safe.

For those attending the fair, “the most important food safety step is to wash your hands before eating or handling food,” said Karen Blakeslee, who is also coordinator of K-State’s Rapid Response Center for food science.

“Several foodborne outbreaks have occurred at fairs because of handling animals and not washing your hands. Many fairs offer extra hand washing stations and hand sanitizer stations to make it easier to clean your hands.”

If you plan on selling food at the fair, Blakeslee said a license may be required depending the number of times a year you are selling the food. Information is available in the publication, Food Handling Guidelines for Exempt Food Vendors.

“Food vendors at fairs bring a wide variety of food options,” Blakeslee said. “But, they also need to follow safe food handling guidelines and local regulations to reduce the risk of foodborne illness.”

Some key steps for vendors include frequent handwashing, wearing plastic gloves or using tongs when handling ready-to-eat food, keeping hot food above 135 degrees Fahrenheit and cold food foods below 41 F, and taking steps to reduce cross contamination by keeping raw foods away from ready-to-eat foods.

“They should also have a three compartment sink station to wash and sanitize equipment,” Blakeslee said.

“Meat products need to be cooked to safe temperatures,” she added. For food service, those temperatures include:
Steaks, roasts and chops – 145 F.
Ground meats – 155 F.
All forms of poultry – 165 F.

Also, leftovers should be reheated to 165 F.

“Keeping foods at proper temperatures is important,” Blakeslee said. “A thermometer is key to knowing the food is staying out of the temperature danger zone between 41 F and 135 F. Using safe food handling practices when preparing and serving is also important.”

Blakeslee publishes a monthly newsletter called You Asked It! that provides numerous tips on being safe and healthy. More information is also available from local extension offices in Kansas.

FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story
Rapid Response Center for food science, https://www.rrc.k-state.edu


You Asked It! monthly newsletter, https://www.rrc.k-state.edu/newsletter

K-State Research and Extension statewide offices, https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/about/statewide-locations.html

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Story by:
Pat Melgares
785-532-1160
melgares@ksu.edu

For more information:
Karen Blakeslee
785-532-1673
kblakesl@ksu.edu