K-State food safety expert shares tips for packing school lunches

Keep hot foods hot, and cold foods cold, says Blakeslee

By Maddy Rohr, K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. – As school resumes, so does packing kids’ lunches. Following food safety procedures is essential for parents in helping to prevent foodborne illness, said Kansas State University food scientist Karen Blakeslee.

“Start by washing your hands,” Blakeslee said. “This can prevent many food safety issues. If taking lunch to school, keep cold food cold, and hot food hot.”

Blakeslee said parents should remind their kids to not share their lunches with other kids because of the risk of food allergens. She also suggests packing foods that don’t require temperature control to keep them safe.

“Many whole fresh fruits, single serve fruit cups, whole grain crackers, peanut butter or other nut butters, and dried meat sticks are safe to pack,” Blakeslee said. “If packing cold or hot food, use ice packs and insulated lunch containers to keep them cold. If taking hot food, use a separate insulated container or bottle to keep that food hot.”

Additionally, Blakeslee encourages parents to ask kids to help plan school lunches, and take them grocery shopping.

“If they help choose and prepare the lunch, they will be excited to eat it,” she said.

Blakeslee, who also is coordinator of K-State’s Rapid Response Center for Food Safety, publishes a monthly newsletter called You Asked It! that provides numerous tips on food safety. More information is also available from local extension offices in Kansas.

FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story
Rapid Response Center, https://www.rrc.k-state.edu
You Asked It! food safety newsletter, [https://www.rrc.k-state.edu/newsletter](https://www.rrc.k-state.edu/newsletter)

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

K-State Research and Extension is a short name for the Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, a program designed to generate and distribute useful knowledge for the wellbeing of Kansans. Supported by county, state, federal and private funds, the program has county extension offices, experiment fields, area extension offices and regional research centers statewide. Its headquarters is on the KState campus in Manhattan. For more information, visit [www.ksre.ksu.edu](http://www.ksre.ksu.edu), K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

**Story By:**  
Maddy Rohr  
Maddy23@ksu.edu

**For more information:**  
Karen Blakeslee  
785-532-1673  
kblakesl@k-state.edu