



** This news release from K-State Research and Extension is available online at <https://ksre-learn.com/picnic-food-safety25>

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Planning a picnic? Food safety should be part of the party

K-State food scientist shares tips for preparing foods safely

K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. – As warmer days become more common, so does the itch to get outside.

If outdoor time means picnic time, Kansas State University food scientist Karen Blakeslee said food safety's four principles – Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill – are still in play.

"Wash your hands, separate food items, (and) keep raw meats away from ready-to-eat foods," said Blakeslee, who is also coordinator of [K-State's Rapid Response Center for food science](#).

"When preparing food, make sure you're keeping knives and cutting boards separate so you're not causing any cross contamination issues."

Blakeslee also reminds consumers to pack their food thermometer to assure meats and other foods are cooked properly. Hamburgers steaks, roasts and chops should be cooked to an internal temperature of 145 degrees Fahrenheit; ground meat (such as beef, pork and lamb) to 160F; and all poultry to 165F.

"Don't rely on color to determine if a food is cooked properly," she said. "K-State meat scientists have done a lot of research over the years that shows that a food may look pink, but is done, and vice versa: a meat may look brown inside but may not be cooked to the proper temperature."

Cold foods should be kept at 40F or colder, Blakeslee said.

"One suggestion I would give is to have a couple of ice chests," she said. "One is for beverages, because that is the one that is opened most often. The other one can contain all of the food that you may pack, including raw meat of any sort, like hamburgers. Pack raw meats separately to prevent cross contamination."

Blakeslee said ice should surround the food. Pack ice on the bottom of the cooler – underneath food – then pack ice over the side and top of food, as well.

More tips from Blakeslee:

- **Bring a plastic tablecloth.** “Picnic tables are in public places that are used by everybody. Plus, there are critters that run around and crawl on those tables.”
- **Bring wash rags and extra water.** Keeping hands clean during outdoor gatherings can be a challenge. Blakeslee suggests packing wet wash rags with soap on them in plastic bags, disposable hand wipes, or extra water and hand soap. “Hand sanitizer is okay, but it really doesn’t work well unless your hands are clean first,” she said. “They’re good in a pinch, but even better after you’ve washed your hands.”
- **Share the responsibility for bringing food.** Potlucks are fine, but often people bring many of the same foods. “Assign different foods to different people,” Blakeslee said. “Some people can bring a salad, others can bring a dessert and so on. This helps reduce the stress on everyone.”

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.

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

You Asked It! 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>

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