

Summertime and Food Safety

We've all had the experience of smelling perishable food that was mistakenly left out at room temperature, or far warmer in the summer. One whiff and we know that it's not fit for eating; but not every food gone bad will throw off a telltale scent.

The Food and Drug Administration offers tips for handling food and cooking safely during the summer, when there are more opportunities for outdoor dining:

- **Keep cold food cold.** Place cold food in a cooler with ice or frozen gel packs. Cold food should be stored at 40 °F or below to prevent bacterial growth. Meat, poultry, and seafood may be packed while still frozen so that they stay colder longer.
- **Organize cooler contents.** Consider packing beverages in one cooler and perishable foods in another. That way, as picnickers open and reopen the beverage cooler to replenish their drinks, the perishable foods won't be exposed to warm outdoor air temperatures.
- **Keep coolers closed:** Once at the picnic site, limit the number of times the cooler is opened as much as you can. This helps to keep the contents cold longer.
- **Don't cross-contaminate.** Be sure to keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood securely wrapped. This keeps their juices from contaminating prepared/cooked foods or foods that will be eaten raw, such as fruits and vegetables.
- **Clean your produce.** Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under running tap water before packing them in the cooler — including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten. Rub firm-skinned fruits and vegetables under running tap water or scrub with a clean vegetable brush while rinsing with running tap water. Dry fruits and vegetables

with a clean cloth towel or paper towel. Packaged fruits and vegetables that are labeled “ready-to-eat,” “washed,” or “triple washed” need not be washed.

Quick Tips for Picnic Site Preparation

Food safety begins with proper hand cleaning — including in outdoor settings. Before you begin setting out your picnic feast, make sure hands and surfaces are clean.

- **Outdoor Hand Cleaning:** If you don't have access to running water, use a water jug, some soap, and paper towels. Or, consider using moist disposable towelettes for cleaning your hands.
- **Utensils and Serving Dishes:** Take care to keep all utensils and platters clean when preparing food.

Follow Safe Grilling Tips

Grilling and picnicking often go hand-in-hand. And just as with cooking indoors, there are important guidelines that should be followed to ensure that your grilled food reaches the table safely.

Marinate safely. Marinate foods in the refrigerator — never on the kitchen counter or outdoors. In addition, if you plan to use some of the marinade as a sauce on the cooked food, reserve a portion separately before adding the raw meat, poultry, or seafood. Don't reuse marinade.

Cook immediately after “partial cooking.” Partial cooking before grilling is only safe when the partially cooked food can go on the hot grill immediately, for example at a home with a grill on the patio or deck.

Cook food thoroughly. When it's time to cook the food, have your food thermometer ready. Always use it to be sure your food is cooked thoroughly.

Keep “ready” food hot. Grilled food can be kept hot until served by moving it to the side of the grill rack.

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Recipe: Perfect Sauteed Carrots

Serves 4

Ingredients

8 medium carrots (1 pound)

2 tablespoons olive oil

¼ teaspoon plus 1 pinch kosher salt

1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme (or other fresh herbs)

Other herbs that work with carrots: basil, chives, oregano, dill

Instructions

Peel carrots and slice them diagonally into rounds (on the bias).

Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium high heat.

Add the carrots and cover.

Cook for 4 minutes without stirring.

Remove the lid, stir, and add the ¼ teaspoon kosher salt.

Continue to saute uncovered 3 to 4 minutes until browned, stirring occasionally.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the fresh herbs and a few more pinches kosher salt to taste.

Serve immediately.