

It's a picnic!

Grilling and eating outside are summer delights. Keep yourself, family and friends safe from food-borne illness by keeping these tips in mind when you plan and prepare an outdoor picnic or barbecue. Be safe and have fun!

Shopping

- Choose pre-cut produce that has been refrigerated or kept on ice, and is free of bruises or other damage.
- Select your meats, eggs and dairy products at the end of your shopping trip.
- Put raw meats and seafood in plastic bags to prevent juices from dripping on other foods.
- Follow the 2-hour rule: Refrigerate perishable foods within 2 hours; if it's 90 degrees or more, refrigerate within 1 hour.

Washing

- Wash your hands, working surfaces, utensils, plates and food containers while preparing food.

Keep it in the cooler.

- Salads with mayonnaise and dressing, dairy-based dips, meat, fish, poultry and sandwich meats should go in a cooler with plenty of ice or frozen gel packs to stay colder than 40°.
- Pack uncooked meats, poultry or seafood frozen so that they stay colder longer. Wrap them very well, so as they thaw, the liquid does not leak on other foods.
- Traveling? Put the cooler in a part of the vehicle that is air-conditioned, not the trunk or the bed of a truck.
- Keep food coolers closed as much as possible.
- Have a separate cooler for beverages, since the

drinks cooler is opened more often than others.

- Put coolers in the shade.
- When serving, return perishable foods to the cooler as soon as possible (follow the 2-hour/1 hour rule described above.)
- Or, serve foods that do not need to stay cool, like fresh fruit and vegetables, whole grain crackers or breads, granola bars or ants on the log (celery and peanut butter).

Grilling tips

- Don't partially cook meats before you pack and carry them to the picnic site. If you precook in the microwave or oven or on the stovetop, grill food immediately afterward.
- Keep utensils, plates and other things that have touched raw meat, poultry, or seafood away from foods you are about to serve. Use separate serving plates and utensils.
- Be sure your meats are adequately cooked. A thermometer is your best guide. Steaks, roasts and fish should be cooked to 145 degrees; pork, and ground beef to 160 degrees and poultry to 165 degrees.
- Vegetables, veggie burgers and fruit can be enjoyed raw or with any amount of grilling – no need for a thermometer.

Using insect repellent? Always spray away from food.

References: www.webmd.com and www.fda.gov

Recipe of the Week : Balsamic Strawberries

6 servings – serve as is or as a topping for angel food cake or frozen yogurt

1 pound fresh strawberries, washed and hulled
2 Tablespoons balsamic vinegar
3 Tablespoons white sugar
¼ teaspoon ground pepper (optional)

1. Cut large strawberries in half.
2. Put berries in a bowl or plastic container.
3. Pour vinegar over berries and sprinkle with sugar. Gently stir to combine.

4. Cover and refrigerate for at least one hour but not more than four hours to allow flavors to combine.
5. If desired, add ground pepper before serving or pass the pepper mill or shaker.

Nutrition information:

Calories: 48 Total fat: 0g
Sodium: 0mg Total carbohydrates: 12g
Dietary fiber: 1.5g

Tip of the Week: At this time of year the weather is improving, but the weeks are packed with activities. Try to avoid the weekend warrior pattern! Get some exercise 3-4 times per week on alternate days. One of the best ways to get injured or sore is to go hard all weekend and do nothing during the week.

--- Adapted from www.about.sportsmedicine.com