

# Serving Up Safe Buffets

## EASY TIPS FOR FOOD SAFETY WHEN ENTERTAINING



### Plan a “bacteria-free buffet” with these helpful tips:

#### Size Matters

If you're planning a buffet at home and are not sure how quickly the food will be eaten, keep buffet serving portions small.



- Prepare a number of small platters and dishes ahead of time, and replace the serving dish with the fresh ones throughout the party.
- Store cold back-up dishes in the refrigerator or keep hot dishes in the oven set at 200 °F to 250 °F prior to serving. This way, your late-arriving guests can enjoy the same appetizing arrangements as the early arrivals.

#### Take Temperatures

Hot foods should be kept at an internal temperature of 140 °F or warmer.

- Use a food thermometer to check. Serve or keep food hot in chafing dishes, slow cookers, and warming trays.
- Be aware that some warmers only hold food at 110 °F to 120 °F, so check the product label to make sure your warmer has the capability to hold foods at 140 °F or warmer. This is the temperature that's required to keep bacteria at bay!
- Eggs and egg dishes, such as quiches or soufflés, may be refrigerated for serving later but should be thoroughly reheated to 165 °F before serving.



Entertaining is one of the mainstays of the holiday season — and helps commemorate milestone events throughout the year, too. With proper prep, you can be creative and tempt your party guests with an array of fun platters... while still keeping food safety in mind!

#### Chill Out

Cold foods should be kept at 40 °F or colder.

- Keep cold foods refrigerated until serving time.
- If food is going to stay out on the buffet table longer than two hours, place plates of cold food on ice to retain the chill.



#### Keep It Fresh

Don't add new food to an already-filled serving dish.

- Instead, replace nearly-empty serving dishes with freshly-filled ones.
- Be aware that during the course of the party, bacteria from people's hands can contaminate the food. Plus, bacteria can multiply at room temperature.



#### Watch the Clock

Remember the 2-Hour Rule: Discard any perishables left out at room temperature for more than two hours, unless you're keeping it hot or cold.

- If the buffet is held in a place where the temperature is above 90 °F, the safe-holding time is reduced to one hour.
- **Watch the clock with leftovers, too!** Whether you're sending “doggie bags” home with guests or are saving them for yourself, leftovers should be refrigerated as soon as guests arrive home and/or within two hours!



*Bon appétit!*

# Celebrate The Four Simple Steps to Food Safety!

As you prepare for your party, remember these general tips:

## Clean

- Wash hands before and after food prep.
- Clean cutting boards, surfaces and utensils between uses with hot, soapy water. You'll be entertaining a crowd – so don't invite foodborne bacteria to the party!



## Separate

- Don't cross-contaminate! Separate raw meats, poultry and seafood in your shopping cart and the refrigerator to prevent their juices from dripping on other foods – especially those that will be eaten raw.
- If possible, use separate cutting boards: one for fruits and vegetables, one for raw meats.
- Always use clean platters and utensils for serving – don't reuse ones that held raw food or marinade without washing it first!



## Cook

- Heating foods to the right temperature for the proper amount of time kills harmful bacteria, so cook meat, poultry, fish, and eggs thoroughly. Use a food thermometer to be sure, and visit <http://1.usa.gov/PYdp6X> for a safe food temperature list.
- If making sauces or gravy using meat juices, be sure to bring it to a boil before serving.



## Chill

- Refrigerate all perishables (foods that can spoil or become contaminated by bacteria if unrefrigerated) up until party time. These foods include:
  - Finger sandwiches
  - Cheese chunks
  - Soufflés
  - Fruit salad
  - Dips
  - Foods that contain dairy products
- Discard any perishable foods that were left at room temperature for more than two hours.



# Adapt "Old Family Recipes" Safely!

Some of your favorite traditional recipes may call for raw or lightly cooked eggs. These may include **homemade Caesar salad dressing, ice cream, custards, rice pudding, chocolate mousse, eggnog, and some sauces.**

However, some raw eggs can contain harmful bacteria. These can be particularly dangerous when consumed by those at higher risk for foodborne illness – such as pregnant women, young children, older adults, and those who may have a compromised immune system.

Help keep your party guests safe by adapting your favorite egg-containing recipes (or substituting prepared products for some items). Here's how:

- Add the eggs to the amount of liquid called for in the recipe, then **heat the mixture** until it reaches 160 °F on a food thermometer.

OR

- Use store-bought products of the foods listed above, which are often already cooked or pasteurized. (Check the label to be sure.)

OR

- Purchase pasteurized eggs. These eggs can be found in some supermarkets and are labeled "pasteurized." Here are several types consumers can buy:
  - Fresh, pasteurized eggs in the shell (found in the refrigerator section).
  - Liquid, pasteurized egg products (found in the refrigerator section).
  - Frozen, pasteurized egg products (found in the frozen food section).
  - Powdered egg whites (found in the baking section).

