



Kendall County Health Department
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POTLUCK DINNERS

How to Handle Foods Safely

A potluck dinner is considered a closed function, not open to the public, where guests bring a dish to pass. This dish may be purchased from a commercial facility or prepared in an individual's home kitchen.

The Kendall County Health department does not inspect or issue permits for potluck dinners. We do, however, offer advice on how to handle foods safely in order to prevent a possible foodborne illness outbreak. By following the guidelines listed below, you can minimize the risk of illnesses being transmitted through foods.

Foods containing bacteria or viruses that can cause foodborne illness do not smell or taste any different from safe foods. So, it is imperative that participants preparing and serving foods for a potluck dinner follow safe food handling precautions.

Potluck safety tips:

- Always wash hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds prior to food prep.
- Always start with clean kitchen surfaces before food prep.
- Prevent cross contamination by washing cutting boards thoroughly after cutting raw meats; store all raw meats below other foods in the refrigerator.
- Wash all fruits and vegetables and store under refrigeration after preparation.
- Prepare foods as close to the serving time as possible.
- Use a thermometer to make sure the proper final cooking temperature is reached.
- Do keep in mind that large quantities take longer periods of time to cool; put foods in shallow pans to accelerate cooling time.
- Transport foods in insulated containers.
- Make sure each dish has its own serving utensil that is kept in the food.
- Keep hot foods above 140°F and cold foods below 41°F.
- Reheat foods rapidly to at least 165°F before serving.
- We recommend discarding leftover foods, but if you prefer to save them be sure to refrigerate the leftovers quickly.