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Planning a “staycation”?

Don’t forget food safety for summer celebrations at home

The Multnomah County Health Department urges the public to handle and prepare food safely for July 4th and summer celebrations. According to The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an estimated 76 million people become ill by mishandled food. Proper food handling is especially important for holiday picnics and family or neighborhood gatherings. “There are a number of simple things you can do to reduce the risk of food-borne illness,” states Ken Yee, Environmental Health Supervisor with Multnomah County Health Department.

These tips include:

- **Keep Cold Foods Cold**
Cold foods, especially sliced meats, potato or pasta salads, cooked vegetables, and cut melons should be kept refrigerated or stored in coolers on drained ice.
- **Refrigerate Promptly**
Hot foods that are stored away for later use must be cooled down properly to prevent growth of disease-producing bacteria. An effective way is to place the container of warm food in an ice water bath with the ice/water level equal to the level of the food product. Stir frequently until the temperature drops to 41 degrees Fahrenheit, then store in refrigerator at 41 F or below and cover the container. Discard leftovers after a few days or after reheating.
- **Cook it Safely**
Hot foods at a picnic or buffet should be kept at 140 F or above. Leftovers should be reheated to 165 F or above. Cook ground meats thoroughly to 155 F or above, poultry to 165 F or above. Use a clean metal stem thermometer to check the internal food temperature. Check our website for information on calibrating the thermometer.
- **Keep it Clean**
Good personal hygiene is critical. Thorough hand washing, especially after using the restroom, and not preparing food if sick will help prevent the spread of illness.
- **Be Smart. Keep Foods Apart.**
Eliminating cross contamination is another important factor to prevent disease. This includes washing and sanitizing cutting boards, storing raw meats away from ready-to-eat foods, and keeping toxic chemicals labeled and stored separately from food and utensils. In addition, wash hands or change disposable gloves between handling raw animal products and ready-to-eat foods.

Multnomah County Health Department’s Environmental Health Office certifies over 22,000 food handlers annually and offers advanced food service sanitation training for industry managers. Nearly 7,000 food service inspections are performed each year in Multnomah County.

For a free pamphlet, *Preparing Safe Meals*, call **503-988-3400** or visit the Health Department’s food safety website at <http://www.mchealthinspect.org/foodsafes.htm>

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