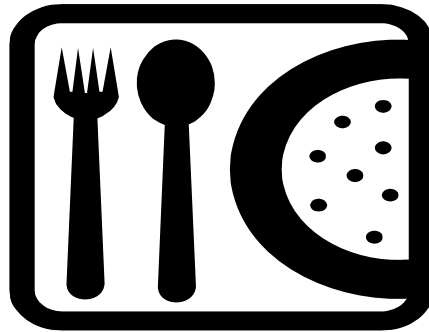


FOOD SAFETY GUIDE

For Volunteer Groups Providing Meals to
Homeless and Disadvantaged Populations



**Environmental Health Division
Food Protection Bureau**

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Introduction

Even though food establishment permits are generally not required for events where the homeless and disadvantaged are served, the food safety rules must still be applied. This guide provides basic food safety information for groups or individuals engaged in providing food to homeless and disadvantaged populations in Salt Lake County. This type of food service is often staffed by volunteers who are not employed in the food industry and who may not be aware of safe food practices. The homeless and transient populations have a higher risk of contracting illness than average people. These guidelines are intended to ensure that they are protected from food-borne illness.

General Food Safety Guidelines

1. Food service workers must practice good hygiene, including frequent hand washing and using gloves to handle ready to eat food.
2. Cook and reheat foods to proper temperatures.
3. Hold foods at proper temperatures.
4. Prevent cross-contamination of food and equipment.
5. Practice proper cleaning and sanitizing procedures.
6. Ill persons should never prepare or serve food.

Suggested Menu

The simpler the menu, the easier it is to maintain food safety. It is recommended that you serve those foods that:

- Are commercially packaged (potato chips, cookies)
- Do not require any heating or cooking (cold cut sandwich)
- Can be heated and served immediately (hot dog, canned chili)
- Can be cooked and served immediately (spaghetti, sloppy Joes)

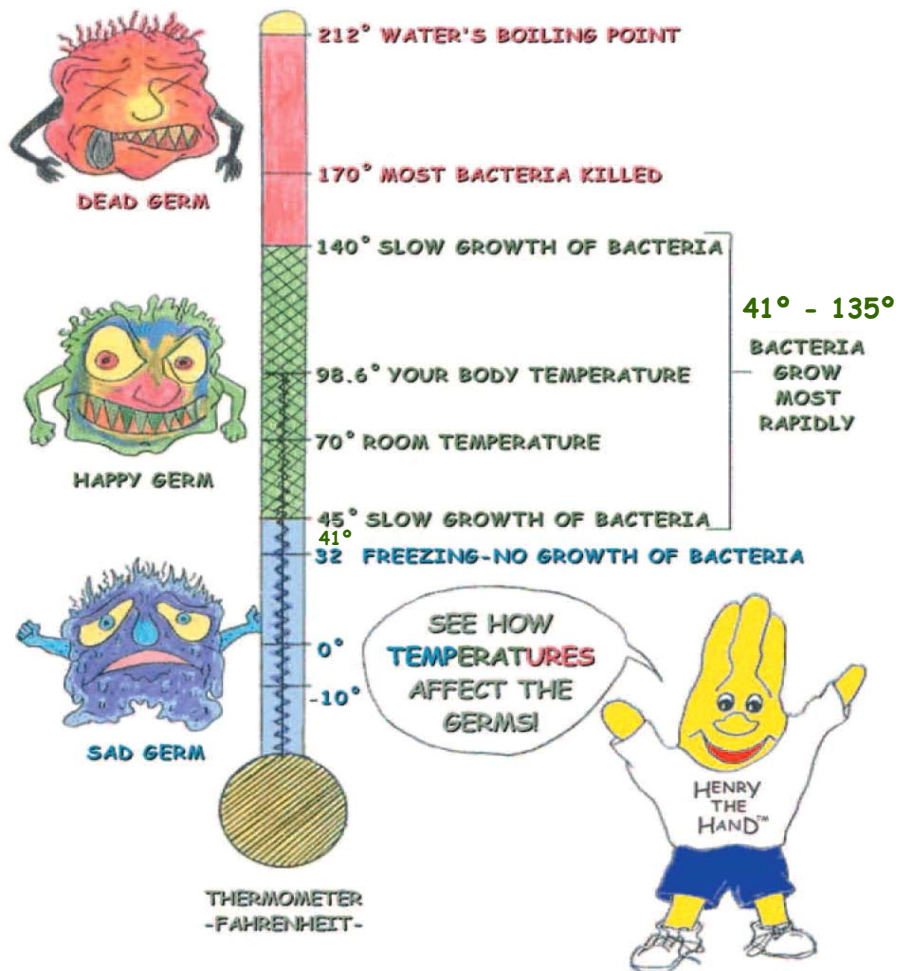
Cooking food in advance is discouraged because it is very difficult to properly cool and store large amounts of food. Even in a professional restaurant it would be a challenge to cook and cool the amount of food needed to serve 50-100 people.

How to Maintain Proper Temperatures

Food must be kept either **cold at 41°F and below**, or **hot at 135°F and above** at all times. Food must only be out at room temperature during absolutely necessary periods of preparation/serving. You must transport cold foods in a cooler with adequate ice. Transport hot foods in a hot box to their destination. You will need a probe thermometer to take temperatures of food.

Minimum Safe Cooking Temperatures:

Poultry (turkey, chicken)	165°F
Ground beef or ground pork	155°F
Steak, roasts, fish, chops, eggs	145°F



WASH YOUR HANDS!

Frequent hand washing is an extremely important method of preventing foodborne illness. **Hands should always be washed BEFORE any food handling**, and whenever they may have become contaminated. When handling food and beverages, hands must be washed in warm water with soap for at least 20 seconds and dried with a paper towel.



Temporary Hand Wash Station

- All food workers must wash hands with soap.
- Hand sanitizers can be used in addition to soap, but not instead of soap.

If a permanent sink is not available, set up a Hand Wash Station like the one below.



Food Handling

Bare-hand contact with ready-to-eat foods must be avoided. Use tongs, spatulas, deli tissues, or single-use gloves. The use of disposable gloves can provide an additional barrier to contamination, but gloves do not replace hand washing. When gloves are worn, they must be used for only one task such as working with ready-to-eat food or with raw animal food, and discarded when damaged or soiled, or when interruptions occur in the operation.

Outdoor Food Service

If you will be preparing or serving food outdoors you must take additional steps to protect the food. The Health Department recommends that you set up a booth with the following:

- A roof, awning or other top covering, impermeable to weather, over the entire food preparation, service, clean-up and storage area.
- Lids or other non-flammable covers over cooking equipment
- Barrier or separation around cooking equipment to prevent patrons from getting burned
- Two side walls (not screening), which will reduce the entry of dust and dirt, and exclude non-authorized personnel.
- The front service wall should be a counter, half-wall or table. The back wall may be open for employee access or solid as desired.
- The floor should be a surface of plywood, concrete, asphalt or other acceptable material. Flooring should be supplied if the booth is on dirt, gravel, grass or poorly drained surfaces.

Ill Food Service Workers

Ill food service workers should never be allowed to work in a food preparation or serving area. These workers can easily transmit disease-causing organisms to food, drink and items such as utensils that patrons use. Ill food workers are a significant cause of food-borne illness. Any person recently having diarrhea, vomiting, nausea, fever with sore throat, jaundice, cuts or burns on hands should not be allowed to work around food.



Home Preparation

The Salt Lake County Health Department recommends that you avoid preparing food in a private residence.



Nobody wants to believe that their home kitchen is dirty or contaminated. Most probably are not. However, kitchens in private homes have a lot more going on in them than just food preparation. This is what sets them apart from kitchens in restaurants, churches, community centers, etc. Home kitchens are often visited by pets, toddlers, and family members whose goal is not food safety or sanitation. This could lead to unintentional contamination of food.

One of the fastest ways to spread disease through food is by having sick people around food or in food preparation areas. Unfortunately, home is where sick people usually go to recover. They stay there to avoid getting other people sick at work or at school. The germs that caused the sickness can easily pass to food in a home setting, and could eventually cause illness in people that eat food prepared in that home.

For these reasons, it is recommended that food be prepared in a nonresidential kitchen such as those found in a church, a community center, or even a restaurant.

Ensuring food safety at your volunteer event is your responsibility. You can help to ensure a healthy, safe and successful event for all to enjoy by following the recommendations in this guide.