

5. Cool it!

PHF should not be in the “Danger Zone” for more than 2 hours (or more than 1 hour outdoors during the hot summer heat).

If you are unable to control the temperature of PHF, eat them within 2 hours or throw them away.

If foods have been properly hot and cold held, it is safe to chill them and store as leftovers.

It is important to cool foods quickly!

- Get hot food in the refrigerator within 2 hours.
- Allow for air circulation – don’t pack the refrigerator too tightly
- Keep the lid off until the food is cold – lids act like a “blanket” and keep the food warm longer.
- Keep the uncovered container on the top shelf (cover the container when the food is cold).
- Don’t fill the containers too full (no more than 2 inches deep for thick foods like stew or beans).

Food Storage Guidelines:

Short, but safer, times to keep your foods fresh.

	<u>Refrigerator</u>	<u>Freezer</u>
Cooked meats.....	3-4 days.....	3-6 mos
Lunch Meats.....	3-4 days.....	No
Raw meats.....	2-3 days.....	2-3 mos
Shell eggs.....	4 weeks.....	Yuck!
Hard cooked eggs...	1 week.....	No
Milk.....	5 days.....	1 month
Cold salads.....	3-5 days.....	No



Remember – Foods are safest within the first 2 hours after they are cooked!

For potluck safety, prepare hot dishes right before the meal, rather than cooking and cooling in advance and then reheating at the potluck.

Potluck Checklist:

- Will I be able to keep my food hot or cold or be able to throw it away within 2 hours (including transport time)?**

If no, bring non-PHF like crackers, chips, sliced vegetables or cookies. Avoid cream pies, meats, melons and potatoes or other starchy dishes.

- Will I be able to transport foods safely?**

Keep PHF out of the “Danger Zone” at all times –even during transport. Provide frozen or hot objects in an insulated cooler to keep your meal cold or hot.

- Will handwashing be available?**

No? Take foods that need to be eaten with a utensil or don’t need to be handled. (Still try to find a handsink!)

- Are people going to touch my food?**

Unless you provide a utensil at each potluck item, people will likely handle your food. Increased handling increases your odds of getting sick from a foodborne illness. Use a utensil or other “barrier” like napkins, wrappers or tissues.

- Planning on potato salad?**

Cold salads made from cooked ingredients (like potato, chicken, or pasta salads) require special care for food safety. It is safest to cook the ingredients and refrigerate them before you assemble the salad. To maximize food safety, make all cold salads with cold ingredients and keep them cold.

Potluck Food Safety Guidelines



For more information:

Manchester Health Department
Environmental Health Division
1528 Elm St.
Manchester NH 03101 (603) 624-6466



Bacteria that cause foodborne illness like to crash potlucks and parties, and they don't usually leave their calling card until the party is over. Although you can't see, taste, or smell them, you can sure feel them when you get sick hours or days later! Follow the storage, sanitation, and cooking tips in this handout to keep these uninvited guests away from your next get-together. This handout is designed for small groups (*not serving foods for the public*) like office, church or social gatherings. If you have more questions or if you want to serve food to the public, please call us at (603) 624-6466.

1. Keep it Clean!

The #1 cause of foodborne illness is germs from dirty hands. To reduce the odds of spreading illness, wash your hands:

- 👉 Before preparing or eating food
- 👉 After going to the bathroom
- 👉 After diapering a child
- 👉 After caring for pets
- 👉 After coughing, sneezing or smoking
- 👉 After handling chemicals
- 👉 Any time your hands may have become contaminated!

In order to properly wash your hands, you must use soap and hot running water. Scrub your hands with the soap for at least 20 seconds before you rinse, making sure to include all parts of your hands (even the backs!). Remember to dry your hands with a clean paper towel.



Feeling ill? Don't pass it on. Keep other people healthier – do not prepare foods for the potluck if anyone in your household has been sick with *vomiting* or *diarrhea* during the week.

Sanitize it!

Surfaces (like cutting boards and utensils) also have germs. *Sanitizing* reduces the number of germs to a safer level.

A recipe for a sanitizer is:

1 teaspoon unscented bleach in 1 gallon of water

Mix a fresh batch each time you cook.

- ☞ To sanitize counters – spray them with sanitizer solution and allow to air dry.
- ☞ To sanitize utensils – after washing with hot soapy water, dip utensils in sanitizer for 1 minute and allow to air dry.

2. Keep it separate!

Germs from raw meat can contaminate other foods. Handle raw meat safely to prevent cross-contamination (spreading bacteria from meat to other foods).

While shopping, choose meats last to keep them cold, and bag them in plastic to keep their juices away from your other foods.

Meat juices might drip! Store raw meats and eggs below other foods in your refrigerator. If this is not possible, keep them in a water tight container.

Make sure to wash your hands and all surfaces and utensils that touch raw meat before you work with other foods.

Be sure to wash all fruits and vegetables under running water before you prepare them. Fruits and veggies need a good shower after playing in the dirt!



Leftovers – All leftovers, assuming they were properly held hot or cold, must be rapidly reheated to at least 165°F. This will help to eliminate any potential bacteria that may have grown in the foods during storage.

What are Potentially Hazardous Foods?

Potentially Hazardous Foods (PHF) create increased risk for foodborne illness because they can let disease-causing (pathogenic) bacteria grow. PHF are generally moist and have protein. Examples include:

- Beef, poultry, pork, lamb, eggs, fish and shellfish
- Milk and dairy products
- Sprouts and *cut* melons
- Cooked* potatoes, beans, pasta and rice

You must control the temperatures of PHF to keep pathogenic bacteria from growing rapidly on your food. It is important to keep PHF out of the "Danger Zone" (avoid temperatures between 41°F-140°F)

3. Cook it!

Cooking meats to the proper temperature kills or destroys most of the parasites, bacteria and viruses that might be in the meat. Use a thermometer to check temperatures.

Minimal Internal Temperatures for safer cooking

Fish, Shellfish & Lamb	145°F
Beef – Whole cuts	145°F
Pork	145°F
Hamburger/Sausage	155°F
Poultry, Stuffed meats, and casseroles	165°F

4. Keep it Hot!

Once cooked, Potentially Hazardous Foods must be kept hot at 140°F or hotter to keep bacteria from growing. Use crock pots, chafing dishes, or other ways to keep your food safe to serve to your guests. If you cannot keep the food hot, it is safest to throw the food away after 2 hours – you can't usually see, smell, or taste the bacteria that cause foodborne illness. Be safe, rather than sorry!