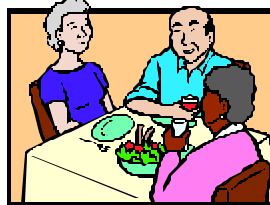




Keep Your Food Safe

When we talk about food safety, many times we think about the food we are making at home. But, not all of us cook every meal ourselves – sometimes we let someone else do the cooking for us.

There are lots of choices for seniors when it comes to letting someone else do the cooking. Many grocery stores offer deli meals – both hot and cold; fast and full service restaurants are available; more convenience foods are available now; and if you qualify, senior meal programs are available.



As we age, our appetites often change. People who used to eat lots of food may find they just can't finish the food on their plate. Economy tells us, throwing this food away is not money wise. We want to save it for later. The problem is, no matter who prepared the food, how it is handled is important to your health. Just because a food has been cooked, doesn't mean it is free of bacteria that can grow and make you sick.



2-Hour Rule

Harmful bacteria grow rapidly in danger zone temperatures (between 40 and 140 degrees F). The rule is: discard any perishable foods that have been at room temperature longer than 2 hours. That's the maximum. Sometimes that's even too long. When you buy hot food, eat and enjoy it within 2 hours. If you won't be eating that soon, keep it covered in an oven that is hot enough to keep the food above 140 degrees F.



Another option is to divide the food into serving portions and refrigerate them. You can reheat them when you are ready to eat. There are more rules for reheating though.

Reheating

Heat food thoroughly until it is 165 degrees F. (Use a thermometer.)

Bring gravy to a rolling boil.

If you use a microwave, cover the food with a lid and rotate the dish so it heats evenly.



Taking Leftovers Home

Sometimes portions served in restaurants and even fast food meals are more than we can eat. Often there is enough for another meal and you want to take the food home. Be careful when you are handling these leftovers.

If you will not be going home within the 2 hours of finishing the meal, safety says to leave the food at the restaurant.

If you are going shopping and will leave the food in the car, that's another problem. The inside of the car can get extremely hot and that will allow bacteria to grow even faster. So, shop first, eat, and get the leftovers home immediately!

Of course, buffets and some Senior Centers do not allow you to take food home – check their policies. And remember, once you take the food out of the restaurant or wherever it was served, it becomes your responsibility to handle it safely!

Prepared by: Shirley Camp, MS, RD
Extension Educator
Nutrition and Wellness
Macomb Extension Center



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
EXTENSION
FAMILY NUTRITION PROGRAM

Cheesy Vegetable Chowder

Makes two 1 ¼ cup servings

1 10-ounce package frozen mixed vegetables
½ cup boiling water
2 Tablespoons margarine
2 Tablespoons flour
¼ teaspoon salt
Pepper
1 cup low-fat milk
½ cup (4 oz.) shredded cheddar cheese

In a saucepan, cook the vegetables in boiling water, covered for 10 minutes. Do not drain. In a separate saucepan, melt margarine. Stir in flour, salt, and pepper to taste. Cook until mixture bubbles and thickens. Stir in milk and cook until thick. Add cheese and stir until cheese is melted. Add undrained vegetables and heat but do not boil.

*Nutrition information per serving:
382 calories, 22 g fat, 32 g carbohydrate,
37 mg cholesterol, 390 mg calcium,
687 mg sodium, 16 g protein*

