

Home Food Safety Al Fresco

A Helping Of Food Safety For Outdoor Dining Year-Round

(NAPSA)—Families across the country will continue to fire up the grill even after summer's close, with many cooking and dining out-of-doors year-round. Luckily, these all-weather cooks can protect their outdoor meals by sticking to a few easy food handling and preparation steps.

"Consider your grill, tailgate party and picnic basket an extension of your kitchen," said Carolyn O'Neil, registered dietitian and national spokesperson for the ADA/ConAgra Foods Home Safety program. "Remember to apply the same home food safety techniques whether eating meals inside or out."

When it comes to safely preparing foods for outdoor dining and/or the grill, a recent survey (Impulse Research, 2003) by the American Dietetic Association (ADA) and ConAgra Foods found that while a few play it safe, most of us are striking out. For example, a majority of respondents (56 percent) don't know what temperature favorites like hamburgers (160 degrees F) and chicken (170 degrees F) should be cooked to for safe eating. And, when it comes to leftovers, one-third (33 percent) report leaving foods out unrefrigerated for more than an hour in hot weather (90 degrees F or above)—an environment that allows harmful bacteria to quickly multiply.

Safe outdoor eats

Fortunately, following these simple home food safety tips from ADA and ConAgra Foods will help guard your grill, protect your picnic and bust any dangerous bacteria:



By properly cooking and handling foods, you can help keep outdoor dining safe.

• **Suds up the BBQ.** Be sure to scrub the grill, outdoor utensils, coolers and other containers with hot soapy water before cooking up or packing up your favorite outdoor dining foods.

• **Props with purpose.** Make home food safety a topic of conversation at your outdoor celebrations by incorporating colorful, thematic coolers, cutting boards, plates and aprons that not only fit the party theme, but also serve an important safety purpose for your guests.

• **Separate treats for backyard feasts.** Keep raw meats and ready-to-eat foods separate. Pack extra plates—always use a separate plate for raw foods and another for cooked foods to prevent cross-contamination. This holds true for your refrigerator, too—store raw meats on lower shelves to prevent raw juices from running onto ready-to-eat foods.

• **Stay in tune with temps.** Favorite outdoor eats can be harmful if not fully cooked. Use a meat thermometer to make sure hamburgers are cooked to 160 degrees F, chicken to

170 degrees F and hot dogs reheated to 160 degrees F. Never partially grill meat or poultry to finish cooking later.

• **Got it made in the shade.** Stock coolers with plenty of ice and/or ice packs to keep foods refrigerated at temperatures below 40 degrees F. Drop a refrigerator thermometer in your cooler to make sure foods are stored at a proper temperature. Transport foods in the back seat of your air-conditioned car instead of the hot trunk. Once at your outdoor dining destination, try to keep foods out of direct sunlight. Set up camp in the shade to make sure your food and guests stay cool.

For more information on dining al fresco

The ADA/ConAgra Foods *Home Food Safety...It's in Your Hands* program educates consumers that home food safety is a serious issue and provides solutions so Americans can easily and safely handle food in their own kitchens and out-of-doors. This program complements government-sponsored food safety initiatives that speak to the leading critical food-handling violations by emphasizing the following four key messages: 1) Wash hands often; 2) Keep raw meats and ready-to-eat foods separate; 3) Cook to proper temperatures; 4) Refrigerate promptly below 40 degrees F.

For more information, visit www.homefoodsafety.org or call ADA's Consumer Nutrition Information Line at (800) 366-1655, where recorded messages (in both English and Spanish) are available 24 hours a day.