



Store picnic food safely

A picnic in the park can be great fun for everyone, but it's important to assure your food arrives safely along with your family and guests. Follow smart food packing guidelines, say the experts at the Institute of Food Technologists. Keep meats, including lunch meats and raw meats, cheeses, and condiments cold in insulated, soft-sided bags or coolers with freezer gel packs.

Food needs to be stored at 40°F or colder to reduce the risk of germ growth, so limit the number of times you open the cooler. Never allow food to sit for more than 2 hours at temperatures below 90°F, and no more than an hour when temperatures exceed 90°F outside. Throw away food that's been sitting out too long.

Securely package raw meat, seafood and poultry to ensure the juices don't contaminate other foods. Pack only the amount of perishable food that you think will be eaten. Beverages and perishable foods should travel in separate containers and coolers, especially if you'll be transporting raw meat.

When it's time to go home, don't reuse packaging material that has contacted raw meats or meat juices. Make sure perishable leftovers stay cold on the trip home. Avoid taking home uncooked leftovers.