

Americans Need a Helping of Food Safety When Dining Outdoors

New Survey Reveals Fourth of July Holiday Most Popular Time to Cook Out

CHICAGO (June 24, 2003) – Americans will soon paint the town red, white and blue, celebrating the Fourth of July with fireworks and food. In fact, this holiday marks the most popular weekend for families to cook and eat outdoors, according to a new survey.* As grills across the country heat up for picnics in the park or backyard barbecues, so does the risk of food poisoning. Luckily, summer chefs can protect their patriotic feasts by sticking to a few easy food-handling and preparation steps.

When it comes to safely preparing foods for outdoor dining and/or the grill, a recent survey by the American Dietetic Association 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°F) and chicken (170°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°F or above) - an environment that allows harmful bacteria to quickly multiply.

A Kitchen on the Move

Consider your picnic basket, grill and cooler an extension of your kitchen. Remember to apply the same home food safety techniques whether preparing meals inside or out.

This is especially important when grilling, as this type of outdoor dining continues to top family menus — with three out of four planning to fire up the grill at least once a week over the summer. Only a few (5 percent) report consistently using a meat/food thermometer to check the doneness of meats. And, 35 percent continue to transport raw meats both to and from the grill on the same plate, risking cross-contamination.

Safe Summertime Eats

Follow these home food safety tips from ADA to guard your grill, protect your picnics and bust any dangerous bacteria:

- **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 summertime treats.
- **Props with Purpose.** Make home food safety a topic of conversation at your Fourth of July and other summer celebrations by incorporating colorful red, white and blue soft and hard-top coolers, cutting boards, plates and aprons that not only fit the party theme, but 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 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.

- **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. And then, transport foods in the air-conditioned back seat of your 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.

With approximately 65,000 members, the American Dietetic Association is the nation's largest organization of food and nutrition professionals. ADA serves the public by promoting optimal nutrition, health and well-being. To locate a registered dietitian in your area, visit the American Dietetic Association at www.eatright.org.

#

**ADA survey conducted by Impulse Research, April 2003.*

Contact: Jennifer Starkey	Julia Dombrowski
American Dietetic Association	American Dietetic Association
800/877-1600, ext. 4802	800/877-1600, ext. 4769