

Keep food safe for tailgating

Tammy Roberts, MS, RD, LD
Nutrition & Health Education Specialist
robertstt@missouri.edu

It won't be long until football season is in full swing. When you think about football, it's really hard not to think about the tailgating that is just as important as the game to many people. The thing that is important about tailgating, other than having a great time, is to keep your food safe so you are healthy for the next game.

Things to keep in mind when you are preparing for tailgating:

1. To prevent spreading of bacteria, wash your hands, work areas and utensils before working with perishable food.
2. Double wrap meats in plastic wrap or bags to prevent contamination of other foods. If possible, have a separate cooler for meats and ready to eat foods.
3. If you do cook the meat before heading to the game, be sure to cook it in plenty of time to allow it to cool before packing it in the cooler. It is important to store perishable foods at or below 40 degrees Fahrenheit.
4. To assure meat is safe, cook hamburgers and brats to 160 degrees and chicken breast to 165 degrees.
5. Remove meat from the grill to a clean platter to avoid cross contamination. (If you put it back on the platter that held the raw meat, bacteria can latch on and grow.)
6. Pack the cooler with plenty of ice to maintain cool temperatures. If it is hot outside, transport the cooler inside the car. The heat of the trunk can make it hard to maintain the proper temperature.
7. We usually say not to leave perishable food out longer than two hours to prevent bacteria growth. If the temperature is around 90 degrees bacteria grows faster so that time is reduced to one hour.
8. Remember that food safety is important for carry-out foods as well. Plan on eating them within two hours after picking them up.

After all of that, all that is left is to enjoy the football game. Go Tigers!