



Make food safety your tailgate goal

Some friends tailgate before football games, complete with grilling burgers and brats in the parking lot outside the stadium. But they don't seem to take basic food safety precautions. They say they've never had a problem, but are there guidelines I can give them?

For people who know a thing or two about food safety, nothing will make them grit their teeth more than hearing, "We've always done it this way and we've never had a problem."

That's what people always say — until they experience a problem. In fact, leaders of a church in North Carolina said something similar last month when nearly 90 people became ill with *Salmonella* poisoning — 13 of them hospitalized. That was after a church barbecue, held annually for 50 years.

Even if you've never had a problem before, you still need to follow common-sense food safety guidelines, because you never know when foodborne illness might raise its ugly head.

Tailgating deserves some special considerations because you're likely in an especially relaxed, carefree atmosphere, yet trying to prepare food in a spot without running water or other conveniences that we often take for granted during food preparation.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture offers tailgating safety tips on its food safety blog (see <http://www.foodsafety.gov/blog/tacklingatailgate.html>) and in a video (<http://bit.ly/youtubetailgate>). Among the guidelines:

- Bring plenty of water and sanitizers. You'll need clean, wet, disposable cloths, moist towelettes and paper towels for cleaning hands and surfaces.
- Be sure any juices from raw meat and poultry don't contaminate other foods. Wrap meat securely; carry it in a separate cooler if possible. Immediately throw away paper plates you use to carry raw meat to the grill.
- When grilling, test meat with a thermometer to be sure it's cooked thoroughly: hamburgers and bratwursts to 160 degrees F; chicken to 165 degrees F.
- Pack cold perishable food in an insulated cooler with several inches of ice, frozen gel packs or containers of ice. Remember, you'll need enough coolers and ice to keep any perishable leftovers — even beans or other dishes you may have brought to the tailgate warm — chilled to 40 degrees F or lower when the party is over.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences and its outreach and research arms, Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@osu.edu.



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AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Oct. 4, 2013

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