



# SAFE FOODS FOR POTLUCKS

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## WHY DO PEOPLE NEED TO BE SURE TO COOK SAFE FOOD FOR POTLUCKS?

Food served at pot lucks can and does cause illness. In December 2014, about 30 people became sick and 1 person died after eating a holiday dinner at a community event with over 100 people in attendance. Fortunately, this is a rare event.

While most food is safe, any food can become contaminated. When preparing foods in larger quantities, there's an increased risk of the foods becoming contaminated or held at temperatures that allow rapid growth of bacteria.

The foods that are most likely to cause illness if they're contaminated are those we call higher risk foods. Examples of these would be ready-to-eat foods and moist, high-protein foods such as milk and milk products, poultry, fish, pork, shellfish, cooked rice, potatoes, and soy protein foods.

## WHEN IS NORTHERN HEALTH APPROVAL REQUIRED FOR A POTLUCK?

NH's Public Health Protection staff regulate community events that are advertised or open to the general public. For example, if a club has a luncheon or tea after their congregation service for its members and their guests, it's considered a private/closed event so Public Health does not get involved.

However, if the club advertised a lunch or tea, or the event is open for the general public to attend, a temporary food permit is required and NH staff will work with them to make their event as safe as possible.

## IF A HEALTH PERMIT IS REQUIRED, HOW CAN I GET ONE?

- Contact an Environmental Health Officer, and they'll help you with your process.
- Review the guidelines for operating a temporary food premises and complete an application to obtain a temporary food permit. A temporary food permit is available for a premises that operates for less than 14 days per year and is free as long as the completed application is submitted more than 14 days before the event.
- Talk about the menu and submit a food safety plan, which is a written set of procedures to ensure that a health hazard doesn't occur.
- Make sure the cooking facility you're using has adequate equipment for the type of food service you've planned, and that it's a permitted facility.
- You must have at least one person with food safety training (FOODSAFE or equivalent) training present and incharge of the event at all times.

For more information: [Food safety courses](#)

## HOW CAN I HOST A SAFE POTLUCK?

### 1. Make sure you wash your hands well!

- Use warm, running water and liquid soap. Rub your hands together for 20 seconds, and rub the backs of your hands, your wrists, between your fingers and under your fingernails.
- Rinse well under running water.
- Dry hands with paper towel.
- Turn off water with the paper towel.
- Throw away the paper towel into lined, covered waste basket.

### 2. Clean the food prep area well

- Wash your hands and then wash any surfaces that come into contact with food.
- Wash and sanitize food contact surfaces.
- Make a sanitizing solution by mixing 2.5 (1 tsp) of bleach into a litre of warm water.
- Store dishcloths in sanitizing solution between each use.

### 3. Separate

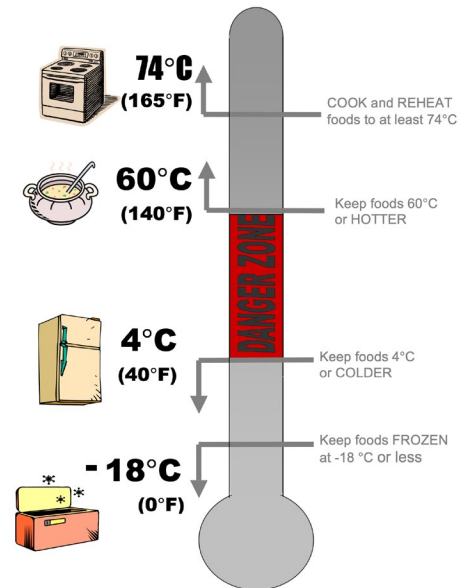
- Cross-contamination can spread bacteria quickly.
- Don't cross-contaminate! Keep raw meat away from ready-to-eat foods such as lettuce, melons and bread.
- Wash and sanitize cutting boards after you've used them.

### 4. Cook

- Cook food to 74 degrees C. You should measure temperatures with a clean, calibrated food thermometer.
- Don't cook food partially for finishing later because that increases the risk of bacterial growth.
- Keep time between cooking and serving to a minimum. Try to prepare and cook food within two hours of the event.

### 5. Chill

- Refrigerate perishable foods promptly in shallow containers.
- Thick foods should be no more than two inches deep; thinner foods should be no more than three inches deep.
- Keep refrigerators at 4°C (40°F) or colder.



### 6. Leftovers

- Leftovers cannot be re-used to serve the public.
- Chill quickly and place in the refrigerator. Throw away any food left out at room temperature for more than 2 hours.
- If reheating always reheat to at least 74°C. Leftovers should only be reheated once.
- Use leftovers within 2-3 days or freeze them for later.
- Use shallow containers to chill food. Thick food should be no more than two inches deep; thinner foods should be no more than three inches deep.

*We work to protect the public from risks of illness and injury so all citizens can achieve and maintain well-being and enjoy healthy productive lives.*

## WHO CAN I CONTACT FOR MORE INFO?

### Contact an Environmental Health Officer

Phone: 250-795-7322

Email: [php@northernhealth.ca](mailto:php@northernhealth.ca)