

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Contact:**

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Eau Claire, WI - May 23, 2022 – 'Tis the season for graduation parties! **Be sure to include food safety as part of your plans.** Events where food is often left out for long periods of time can leave the door open for uninvited guests—bacteria that can make people sick.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that each year 17,000 residents in Eau Claire County will become sick from consuming unsafe food. With warmer temperatures, foodborne illness rates increase in the summer. Warmer temperatures can cause the number of bacteria in food to double in as little as 20 minutes!

“By following 4 simple food safety steps – clean, separate, cook, and chill – you can protect your guests from getting a foodborne illness,” says Nicole Kragness, Regulation and Licensing Division Manager at the Eau Claire City-County Health Department. See additional tips below.

Clean: Wash your hands and surfaces often.

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water before, during, and after preparing food, especially in between handling raw meat and ready-to-eat foods.
- Wash utensils, cutting boards, and countertops with warm, soapy water after preparing each food item.
- If you don't have access to running water, you can use a water jug, soap, and paper towel. You can also use moist disposable towelettes to clean your hands.

Separate: Keep raw and ready-to-eat foods away from each other.

- Use separate cutting boards and utensils for raw meat and foods that won't be cooked, such as bread, fruit, and summer salads.
- Use clean plates and utensils for cooked meat. Don't use the same utensils that were used for raw meat for other food.

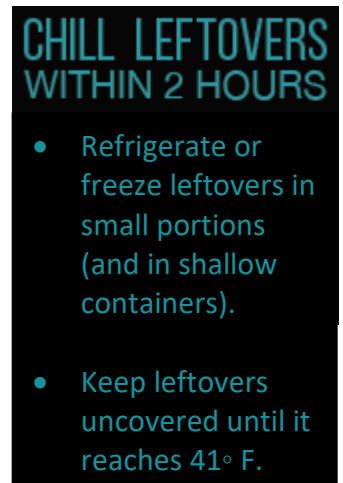
Cook food to the right temperature.

- Use a clean thermometer to check your food temperatures.
- **Keep hot food hot.** Food can be moved to the side of grill to keep warm until serving
- **Reheat your food properly.** Pre-cooked foods should be reheated to 165° F in two hours on a stove, in a microwave, or in a roaster.



Chill: Refrigerate promptly.

- If there's no refrigerator: Use insulated coolers and fill with ice or ice packs. A full cooler stays cold longer.
- Avoid opening coolers repeatedly.
- **Keep cold food cold and below 41°F.** This includes raw meat, poultry, and seafood, deli meats and sandwiches, summer salads (pasta salad, potato salad, etc.), cut fruits and vegetables, and dairy products.
- If you have to prep food ahead of time, make sure the food is cooled properly after prepping it.
- Refrigerate leftovers quickly. If perishable foods are out longer than two hours, or one hour at 90°F, throw it out.



For more information on how to keep your food safe, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/index.html>.

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