

So, You Want to Have a Fundraiser?

Whether you are planning a chicken barbecue, spaghetti supper or pancake breakfast, there is some important information you need to know to make the event a healthy success.

Plan Ahead

As soon as you start planning for your event, that's the time to involve the Louisiana Department of Health. You may need a temporary food permit. The health department will need to know:

- The menu – what food do you plan to serve? About how many people do you expect?
- Where will the food be prepared? (for example, no food prepared at home is allowed)
- Where will the event be held and what kind of facilities are available (sinks, cooking equipment, etc.)?
- Visit www.eatsafe.la.gov for information including the [plans review questionnaire](#).
- Other agencies such as local planning offices and the tax official should be contacted for occupancy and tax licenses.

Work Together

Your local health department wants to work with you to identify safe practices to serve food at a fundraising event. Talk to us early, so that together we can identify strategies for assuring community health and safety. For example, home-cooked food is not allowed. Maybe there is a local restaurant, school, church, firehouse or hotel with a health department approved kitchen that is willing to host. Or, instead of serving a food that needs special handling to keep safe, maybe you can consider other choices. In some cases, we may be able to make helpful recommendations as you adjust the menu or process you were planning to use for food preparation.

As with everything, it's all about being prepared! By the time you are ready to advertise your event, you will be confident that all the food safety issues have been addressed. Volunteers who work at fund-raisers need to know how to handle food safely, because food that is mishandled can cause foodborne illness, especially among infants, young children, older adults, pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems. Foodborne illness, or “food poisoning,” is caused by eating food that is contaminated with disease-causing organisms, often bacteria. Viruses cause the majority of food borne illnesses contracted at food establishments. They are introduced into the equation via improper handling practices, poor personal hygiene, or having infectious individuals handling the food. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that approximately 76 million people get sick and 5,000 people die from food borne illness each year. Foodborne illness often has flu-like symptoms, but it can be more serious – even fatal.

Make a list of the food, equipment and supplies that will be needed for the event, including cutting boards, utensils, food thermometers, cookware, storage containers, coolers, ice, gel packs, paper towels, etc. Be sure there is adequate refrigerator and freezer space. Check for a source of potable water. The plans review questionnaire will help identify the particulars.

Post kitchen rules on preparing and serving food. Keep the kitchen, appliances and work surfaces clean. Use a solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented, liquid chlorine bleach in 1 gallon of water to sanitize washed surfaces and utensils. Discard food that is old and should not be used in the event. Remove all cleaning fluids and non-food items from food preparation areas so that it does not get into food accidentally.

Purchasing and Storing Food for the Event

Do not use food that is past the “use-by” or “sell-by” date or foods that have been thawed and refrozen. Do not use meat, poultry or seafood that is in torn or leaking packages. Do not purchase canned goods that are dented, leaking, bulging or rusted as these are warning signs that bacteria may be growing in the cans. All food should be stored quickly, at least within two hours after purchasing. Keep food out of the “Danger Zone” (between 41° and 135° F). Bacteria multiply rapidly in the Danger Zone and can increase to the levels needed to cause foodborne illness. Keep hot foods hot (135° F or warmer) and cold foods cold (41° F or colder). Use an appliance thermometer to make sure the temperature of the refrigerator is 41° F or below, and the freezer is 0° F or below. As a temporary solution, if there is not enough room in the refrigerator, place food in coolers with frozen gel packs.

Cook fresh poultry, fish and ground meats within two days of purchase, and beef, lamb, pork or veal within three to five days. Use egg, chicken, tuna and macaroni salads that were prepared in a store within three to five days of purchase. Cooked casseroles containing meat and soups and stews containing meat and vegetables can be stored in the refrigerator, after proper

cooling, for three to four days before the event. Fresh shrimp, scallops, crawfish, crabs and oysters are highly perishable and must be used within one to two days. Any potentially hazardous food should be from approved sources, even if donated.

Preparing and Serving Food for the Event

Volunteers who have a cold, fever, diarrhea or cough should not prepare or serve food as they can pass germs (pathogens) and viruses on to others. Infected wounds, cuts and boils should be double covered with impermeable bandages. Aprons or clean clothes should be worn, and hair nets or hats must be worn to prevent hair from getting into food and to discourage handlers from contaminating their hands by touching their hair and faces.

Wash hands and kitchen surfaces often because bacteria can be spread throughout the kitchen. Wash hands with hot, soapy water for at least 20 seconds prior to handling food and between preparing different foods. Wash cutting boards, utensils and countertops with hot, soapy water too. Follow the steps for wash-rinse-sanitize-air dry. Avoid cross-contamination; use one cutting board for fresh produce and another for preparing raw meat, poultry and seafood.

The **Food Safety Checklist** will help you keep food safe. Thaw food in the refrigerator or in the microwave immediately before cooking. Marinate food in the refrigerator in a covered, nonmetallic container. Rinse all fresh fruits and vegetables under running potable tap water before use. Do not use soap. Scrub thick-skinned produce with a brush.

Never partially cook food for finishing later because this increases the risk of bacterial growth as it keeps food within the "Danger Zone" for too long. Do not use recipes in which eggs remain raw or partially cooked. Eggs should be prepared immediately after breaking. When possible, substitute pasteurized eggs for raw eggs.

Use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature of meat, poultry, casseroles and other food. Check the temperature in several places, and cook all foods according to the recommendations in **Internal Cooking Temperatures** table. Eggs should be cooked until they are firm and no longer runny. Seafood should have an opaque look and flaky texture.

Internal Cooking Temperatures Food	Temperature (degrees F)
Eggs and egg dishes	160
Ground turkey, chicken	165
Ground beef, veal, pork, lamb	160
Fresh beef, veal, and lamb steaks, roasts, chops -whole intact cuts with 3 minute rest time	145
Fresh pork with 3 minute rest time	145
Fresh ham (raw) with 3 minute rest time	145
Fully cooked ham (reheat)	140
All poultry products and stuffing	165
Seafood	145
Casseroles	165

Foods that have been cooked ahead should be reheated to at least 165° F. Use stoves, microwave ovens, convection ovens or double boilers to reheat foods. Reheating leftovers in some slow cookers, steam tables or chafing dishes is not recommended because foods stay in the "Danger Zone" too long.

Keep cold food cold (41° F or below) and hot food hot (135° F or higher) when serving the food. Keep food cold in the refrigerator, in coolers or on ice beds on the serving line. Keep hot food in the oven, in heated chafing dishes or in preheated steam tables, warming trays or slow cookers.

Use clean serving containers and utensils. Do not use a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry or seafood unless the plate has been properly washed, rinsed and sanitized. When a dish is nearly empty, replace it with a fresh container of food. Serve sauces, salsas and salad dressings either in single portions or in bottles. Some low-risk foods which have been prepared in homes may be allowed. Acceptable homemade baked goods include fruit pies, candies, cakes, cookies and bread, as they pose little risk and are safe to serve. Unacceptable foods include home-canned foods, relishes and pickles, or cream pies, cream-filled pastries and custards.

Many people have food allergies, so foods containing milk, eggs, soy, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish or wheat may not be the best choices for serving at the event unless there are alternative choices. When a food contains these products, make sure your volunteers are aware and can answer questions regarding ingredients. Also, you can note this on an index card and place the card next to the food item on the serving line.

Cleanup After the Event

Discard all perishable foods, such as meat, poultry, eggs and casseroles, left at room temperature longer than four hours. If air temperature is above 90°F, you may want to discard sooner to be safe. Some exceptions are foods such as cookies, crackers, bread and whole fruit. Immediately refrigerate or freeze remaining leftovers in shallow containers, and label and date the containers. If you are unsure of the safety of the food, throw it out!

Questions and Answers

- **Do I always need a food permit?**

If you will be serving food, in most cases you will be required to have a temporary food service permit. By checking with your local LDH office as soon as possible, you can find out whether you need one or not. Some events do not require a permit. A religious or charitable organization's bake sale is allowed by law if the consumer is informed by a clearly visible placard at the sales or service location that the food is prepared in a kitchen that is not subject to regulation and inspection by the regulatory authority. Fairs or festivals that are officially acknowledged in writing as recognized by a state, parish or municipal governmental body or by the Louisiana Association of Fairs and Festivals are exempted from requiring retail food permits.

- **Does this apply only to fundraising events?**

No, fundraisers fall under the category of "temporary food service". Louisiana Administrative Code Title 51 Part XXIII defines temporary food service as a fixed or mobile establishment that operates for a period of time no more than 21 consecutive days in conjunction with a single event in a single location such as, but not limited to a festival or fair.

- **What is the health basis for issuing temporary food service permits?**

Both the fundraising planning committee and the health department share the common goal of a safe event. If food is not handled or cooked properly, it can get contaminated with harmful bacteria and viruses and people can get sick. It is in everyone's best interests to work together to prevent problems and avoid illness.

- **What other steps do I need to take to keep food safe?**

The health department can offer advice on your event when you contact them, but here are the basic ideas:

- Choose a food-safe menu.
 - Keep it simple and bear in mind that some foods need special handling to avoid bacterial growth (such as meats, eggs, dairy products, cut fruits and vegetables).
 - Use foods only from approved sources (for example, commercial foods or those cooked in permitted kitchens). Foods prepared or cooked at home would not be considered an approved source.
- Practice good health and hygiene.
 - Don't prepare or serve food if you are ill, or have open sores or infected cuts.
 - Wear clean clothing or aprons.
 - Restrain hair in a hat or net.
 - Wash your hands before preparing and serving food.
 - Wash your hands when changing tasks or when your hands become soiled.
 - Wear gloves when working with ready-to-eat foods, such as sandwiches and salads.
- Maintain good practices in the food area.
 - Keep food at proper temperature. To control the growth of bacteria, you need to cook foods to the right temperature. If you are transporting food, reheating food, storing food, or serving foods hot or cold, you will need to make sure they stay at the right temperature.
 - Keep raw food preparation areas separate from areas with cooked or ready-to-eat foods.
 - Wash pans, knives, spoons, cutting boards and other equipment in hot soapy water and rinse in hot clean water, follow with a sanitizer rinse and allow the dishes to air dry.
 - Sanitize food contact surfaces with a solution of bleach and water (one tablespoon of unscented household bleach into one gallon of water).
 - Empty and remove trash frequently.

- **Where can I get more information?**

- The Louisiana Department of Health provides coverage for most parishes in the state. Please visit www.eatsafe.la.gov or click [here for parish contact information](#).
- To review the Louisiana Administrative Code, click [Title 51 Public Health Sanitary Code](#), and search for Part XXIII Retail Food Establishments.
- The following are produced by the USDA:
 - For consumers at family gatherings, Cooking for Groups [A Volunteer's Guide to Food Safety](#).
 - [Kitchen Companion: Your Safe Food Handbook](#)

LDH TEMPORARY EVENT FOOD SAFETY CHECKLIST

EVENT PLANNING	COMPLETED	NOTES
LDH Temporary Permit to Operate		
Volunteers trained for event		
Adequate refrigerator & freezer space		
Thermometer present in refrigerators. Temperature should be well below 41°F		
Sufficient cutting boards and food grade containers		
Sufficient serving dishes and utensils		
Potable water available		
Hand washing facilities and supplies are present		
Cleaning supplies and sanitizers are present and stored away from food and food contact surfaces		
Safe handling guides are posted for workers to see		
FOOD SHOPPING & STORAGE	COMPLETED	NOTES
No item is past the “use by”, “sell by”, or expiration date		
No packages are leaking or torn		
No cans are dented, leaking, bulging or rusted		
All cold foods have been stored in the refrigerator		
All frozen foods have been stored in the freezer		
Packages of raw poultry, meat, and seafood are stored beneath ready to eat items or fruit or vegetables		
FOOD PREPARATION & STORAGE	COMPLETED	NOTES
Kitchen appliances and work surfaces have been cleaned and sanitized		
Sanitizing solutions are prepared		
Food thermometers have been calibrated		
Volunteers have at least two impermeable bandages on any wounds, cuts or boils		
Volunteers are wearing clean clothes, hair restraints and have gloves available for least possible hand contact with ready to eat foods		
Separate cutting boards for produce and various meat products are available		
Hot foods have been heated/cooked to the appropriate temperatures		
All foods have serving utensils		
Hot foods are being held under temperature control so that all parts are at least 135 °F		
Cold foods are maintained at 41 °F or colder		
No home prepared high risk foods are being served		
Allergen information is available		

