

# Camp Food Safety



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## Introduction

This factsheet is designed to give basic guidance for food safety at camp. More detailed information is available in factsheet FS320003 *Food Safety in Scouting*. Whilst this information is principally aimed at standing camps, those planning and running camping in smaller units, such as Patrols or Explorer Scout Units, should adapt the advice appropriately.

There are Food Safety Laws and Regulations that affect food and food safety. The rules are simple and straightforward and are nearly all common sense.

## Ok, but what about camp?

To ensure the safety of our Members it is imperative to follow good practises. Most rules can be easily achieved and are already in place on well run camps.

Storage temperatures are probably the most difficult to achieve. Even this problem can be overcome either by careful menu planning and choice of ingredients that are safe to store and produce, or by providing suitable storage, cool boxes, portable refrigerators, or careful purchase of perishable items just before use.

## So what do we need to look out for?

### Food hygiene

As a food handler, it is important that you ensure that you maintain the highest standard of cleanliness and hygiene at all times. **Think clean!** The incidence of food poisoning has been on the increase for many years, often resulting in some large and highly publicised outbreaks

## High risk foods

High-risk foods are those generally intended to be consumed without any further cooking, which would destroy harmful food poisoning bacteria. High-risk foods include cooked meat and poultry, cooked meat products, egg products and dairy foods. These foods should always be kept separate from raw food.

It is therefore important to store raw meats, poultry, fish and vegetables in separate cool boxes. Use separate coloured chopping boards for raw foods, cooked foods and vegetables. If this is not possible then ensure that the boards and equipment that are used are washed in very hot soapy water between each use. The use of anti-bacterial sprays on work surfaces is another good way of eliminating bacteria. For work surfaces anti-bacterial sprays can be purchased from most supermarkets.

Hand washing is probably the most important thing to remember. Remember that our young people should also wash their hands before helping to prepare food, set tables or eating, especially when outdoors. If using gloves to prepare food, treat them like your hands, wash them before using them and in between if necessary.

Remember, food that is contaminated by food poisoning bacteria usually looks, tastes and smells completely normal. Food poisoning bacteria cannot be detected without laboratory examination.

Bacteria are microscopic organisms, often referred to as germs. These are found everywhere, including on and in humans and

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animals, on food, in water, soil and air. A small number of bacteria are harmful. It is these that give rise to food poisoning.

### **Prevention of food poisoning**

These are some of the main ways of breaking the food poisoning chain:

- Keep food covered wherever possible.
- Do not use damaged or dirty equipment. Clean and sanitise with anti-bacterial spray all work surfaces, before and after use.
- Handle food as little as possible. If possible tongs or similar should be used in preference to hands.
- Raw and cooked foods must be kept separate at all stages of preparation, storage and distribution.
- Insects, animals and birds must be prevented from entering or living in food preparation or storage areas. Remember squirrels are also pests and are very clever. Keep all packet foods in lidded containers; squirrels can however chew through plastic.
- Wash your hands after smoking, sneezing, coughing, after visiting the toilet, handling rubbish as well as before and after handling food. Clothes should also be clean.
- Ensure waste food and refuse is removed from food preparation areas regularly.
- Do not allow dried foods to become moist, as this will encourage the growth of bacteria and moulds.
- Destruction of bacteria within food can be achieved by thorough cooking.

### **Smoking**

Do not smoke in the areas where food is being prepared. Smoking not only leads to the contamination of food by cigarette ends and ash, but also can give rise to cross-contamination.

Whilst smoking you touch your lips with your fingers and this can result in the transfer of harmful bacteria to food. Smoking encourages coughing and, therefore, droplet infection. Cigarette ends contaminated with saliva may be placed on work surfaces. It is bad practice to stand outside a kitchen door smoking and creates a bad image - so this should be discouraged.

### **Canned foods**

The risk of contracting an illness from canned foods is very small. Ensure, however, that badly dented, seam damaged, holed or rusty cans are

rejected. When at camp, wipe the lids of cans before opening with a cloth dampened with anti-bacterial spray. Remember to check for out of date cans before using after being stored away.

### **Refrigeration**

When camping, separate cool boxes would be ideal. Ensure that you can get your cool pack refrozen or use portable refrigerators.

### **Preparation and cooking of food**

Good hygiene during food preparation prevents food poisoning. Raw food and high-risk food should ideally be prepared in separate areas with separate equipment. If this is not possible, then raw food and high risk food should be kept separate, and all equipment, surfaces etc. which come in contact with them should be thoroughly washed in between the preparation of raw and cooked foods. The handling of food should be kept to a minimum.

Thorough cooking of food is important to destroy harmful bacteria. After cooking, the food should be eaten as soon as possible. Always cut through poultry and meat to ensure it is fully cooked. Pay particular attention to this when barbecuing food. Ensure it is cooked slowly and thoroughly and not just done on the outside.

### **Cleaning and disposal of waste**

To be effective, cleaning must be planned. In camp, this would be dealt with by normal good housekeeping. Ensure that food debris is not left on tables, cookers or on the floor. Always clean tables before and after use. Take all unused foods back to the store tent and store correctly and safely. All refuse containers must be emptied and cleaned regularly. In particular, all refuse and waste food material must be removed from inside any preparation area at the end of each meal. This is most important at camp to deter birds and other pests.

## Pest control

When at camp the easiest way to avoid pest problems is not to leave any food or rubbish where it may attract them. Think clean.

## Safety in the kitchen

It is essential that everyone preparing, cooking and serving of food are aware of the need for certain elementary precautions of safety, in order to minimise the risk of accident.

1. Do not leave metal spoons in boiling liquids.
2. Do not leave handles of cooking pans over the gas flame.
3. Always carry a knife with its point towards the floor.
4. Never attempt to catch a knife if you drop it.
5. Always cut or chop on a board, never in the hand.
6. When using a hand held can opener, protect the other hand with a cloth or kitchen towel.
7. Always clean up any spilled grease or fat from the floor immediately using hot soapy water.
8. Never use a damp cloth for lifting or carrying hot utensils. Heat penetrates more quickly than a dry cloth.
9. Never wear sandals or open shoes in the kitchen.
10. Pans containing hot fat, which has caught fire, should be extinguished by smothering with a fire blanket or a thick damp cloth. Never put water on a fat or oil fire.
11. For economy, as well as safety, all gas and electrical appliances must be turned off when not in use. Gas cylinders should be turned off when not in use.
12. Make sure that the first aid box is readily accessible and that it contains sufficient waterproof dressings and burn dressings.

13. Never attempt to carry large heavy containers of hot food single handed. Get assistance.
14. Do not reach over naked flames.
15. Never place cleaning fluids into bottles originally used for food or drink e.g. lemonade and milk bottles.
16. Do not place knives or other sharp implements in washing up bowl unless you intend to wash them immediately. You may be distracted and forget they are in there.
17. Wear a suitable apron when cooking.
18. Ensure there is a suitable water supply nearby to treat any burns.

## Menu planning

Some tips on menu planning:

- Try to avoid high-risk (pre-cooked high protein) foods.
- Consider safe options to hazardous foodstuffs – will tinned corned beef suffice in place of raw mince?
- Help youngsters to recognise the importance of food hygiene in the kitchen. Design the camp kitchen for hygiene as well as convenience and safety.
- Take into account the transit time of food from the point of purchase (or removal from temperature controlled conditions) to the point of preparation and consumption.
- Treat long life products such as milk and cream as fresh once opened.
- Plan your menu according to the facilities that you will have.

Additional advice can be found at the Food Standards Agency website [www.food.gov](http://www.food.gov) and from your County / Area Safety in Scouting Co-ordinator.

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We have included, with this factsheet, some **Quick Tips**, which you can display in your camp kitchen to encourage good practise. Perhaps laminate them and hang them up for all to see.

**Happy and healthy camping!**

## QUICK TIPS

When planning a menu for a sleepover, pack holiday or camp take into account what storage & cooking facilities you have available.

Check with the campsite or owners that water is Drinkable Water.

Ensure that all cooking equipment is clean before use. Don't assume!

Spray and wipe down all working surfaces and tables with anti-bacterial spray before & after use.

Do not store any food on the ground - remember squirrels and birds are pests and can get into containers.

Store packets, bread, biscuits and cakes in containers with lids (preferably tins).

Put vegetables, salad and fruit in a cool box or lidded container.

Ensure that you have cool boxes or some type of portable refrigeration to store chilled / frozen foods. Ensure that there are sufficient ice packs for this purpose. Check to see if the site has the facility to freeze ice packs.

Take meat items frozen so that they can defrost slowly in a cool box.

It is better to use long life milk / cream than fresh when camping, unless you can get regular fresh supplies. Treat as fresh once opened.

Always cut through meat / poultry to ensure it is fully cooked.

Keep raw and cooked (including 'ready to eat' food like cheese, sausage rolls, sandwiches etc...) foods strictly separate.

It is better to eat cooked food hot, straight from cooking and not reheated.

Avoid unnecessary handling of food, use spoons or tongs.

Ensure that everyone washes their hands before eating even when providing own food.

Use hot water & detergent when washing up. Ideally use a second bowl or sink with very hot water for rinsing.

Do not use tea towels that have fallen on the floor.

Ensure cuts and sores are covered with a waterproof dressing, disposable gloves over the dressing will give added protection but remember to wash as hands.

E. Coli can be found on the ground and is usually carried by animals. When organising a camp on fields where animals have been grazed, the animals must be removed 3 weeks before the start of the camp.

If you see something wrong - take action to correct it, **DON'T LEAVE IT !**