

Food Safety and Camping

► Keeping food safe to eat is crucial on any camping adventure. By following simple steps before and during your trip, you can keep your experience happy and healthy.

Plan Ahead & Get Organized

- Purchase a food thermometer to maintain and check food temperatures.
- Purchase freezable gel packets for packing a cooler.
- Plan meals per individual to avoid leftovers.
- Use a well-insulated cooler.
- Pack airtight containers for storage.
- Pack utensils, spatulas, tongs, and other cooking tools.
- Plan meals using both perishable and nonperishable food. Perishable food consists of raw meats, poultry, and fresh vegetables that require refrigeration. Nonperishable food consists of dried fruits, nuts, and other food that does not require refrigeration.
- Plan meals that require only one pot. This will reduce your meal preparation and cleanup.
- Ask if your campsite allows campfires and whether firewood and a grill are provided.

Use the Right Cookware & Tools

Great camping and camp cooking start with having the right equipment. With so many options available, it can be hard to know what you need and don't need. Some cooking tools make campfire cooking a breeze, while others can make it a little more difficult.

The type of cookware you use comes down to what type of camping you will be doing. If you are camping in an RV or travel trailer you won't be concerned about weight. You can go with the ever-reliable cast iron Dutch oven. People have been using cast iron for centuries to cook campfire meals such as stews, soups, cornbread, biscuits, and cobbles.

To make the most of your campfire cooking, consider using a fire grate. A fire grate is a large steel structure, similar to the grates you find on an outdoor grill. These



grates are designed to fit over your campfire, letting you cook without the risk of burning your meal.

If you'll be backpacking, use a pot or pan made of titanium or aluminum. A pan also can substitute for a plate. Multiuse items are ideal. Pack a light butane burner stove or one that uses an alternative fuel, such as Sterno, for a heat source that can be carried in a backpack.

Several cooking equipment options for backpacking are available to campers. Start with a few basic pieces you will need. These include a stove, stove fuel, a pot, eating utensils, and a lighter.

You can use a super-simple and lightweight stove that screws directly onto the fuel canister. Make sure you buy the right fuel for your stove or you may end up without a flame to cook with. Use a lightweight pot that can be used for a variety of needs, such as boiling water or cooking a meal. There also are lightweight cook sets you can purchase. Usually packaged in a set of three, these allow you to work with several different ingredients at a time.

Don't forget eating and cooking utensils. A spoon or fork from home or a long-handled spork will work. The spork will keep your hands from getting messy when you're reaching into a pot or bag.

Use a lighter or matches to start your fire or light your stove. It is always a good idea to have more than one way to start a fire when you're camping. Consider bringing a lighter, a small flint, and waterproof matches.

These are just a few options that are out there. It all comes down to the time and effort you want to put into the process and the type of camping you are doing. No matter the type of camping, preparation is key.

Keep It Cold

- Keep cold food at 40 degrees F or below.
- Move food immediately from the refrigerator to the cooler.
- Place frozen gel packs in both the top and bottom of the cooler to keep food cold.
- Transport coolers in the passenger area of the car.

Keep It Clean

- Wash your hands for 20 seconds using soap and clean water.
- Clean your coolers and other food containers before and after your trip.
- Package raw meats, poultry, and fish in a separate clean cooler to keep raw liquids from contaminating ready-to-eat food.
- Use separate clean spatulas, tongs, cutting boards, and other camping equipment to prevent cross-contamination.
- Never use the same plate that held raw food to plate cooked food.
- Use a clean plate for all cooked food.
- Keep your cooking area clean before, during, and after cooking.

Cook It

Be sure to pack a food thermometer to ensure that you cook food to the correct internal temperature.

Hamburger patty	160 degrees F
All poultry	165 degrees F
Beef steak and roast	145 degrees F
Pork steak and roast	145 degrees F
Hotdogs	160 degrees F

Enjoy Your Meal!

- Eat meals within 2 hours of cooking.
- Eat food within an hour of preparation if the weather is extremely warm (90 degrees F or above).

Clean Up

- Clean food tables and grill area.
- Store leftovers in a separate cooler within the time frame noted above.



Zachery Brannon, County Extension Coordinator, Susan Hill, Regional Extension Agent, Food Safety and Quality, both with Auburn University

For more information, contact your county Extension office. Visit www.aces.edu/directory.

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New January 2022, FCS-2635

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