

# Food Safety Tips for Taste Tests

*Nutrition demonstrations and taste tests are opportunities to model and instruct people about good nutrition and food safety. Help everyone stay safe by following the food safety tips below.*



## Sample Preparation

- Anyone who prepares or handles food must first wash their hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds. Hand sanitizer is not adequate for this purpose.
- Cuts must be covered with a clean bandage and glove over the bandage.
- People who are sick should not prepare food for others. Wait 24 hours after symptoms subside before preparing or serving food.
- Make sure utensils, counters, sinks, cutting boards, dishes are washed with hot soapy water before and after use. Clean spills immediately.
- Fresh produce from packages labeled as “ready-to-eat,” “washed,” or “triple washed” do not need to be re-washed. All other fresh produce, including those with skin and rinds that are not eaten, must be rinsed and/or scrubbed under drinkable running water. No special washing solutions are needed.
- Foods that will be cooked or served hot must be brought to the proper temperatures as measured with a clean, calibrated thermometer.
- Food cooked in the microwave should be covered, stirred, and rotated for even cooking. If food is thawed in the microwave, it should be cooked or used immediately.
- If you bring pre-cooked hot food to another site, it should be kept above 140°F or higher. Consider using warming trays or a hot slow cooker to keep food hot.

## Serving the Sample

- Use clean coolers with ice or ice packs to bring cold food to the site. Only take out as much as you need at any given time.
- Clean the table or counter you will be serving samples from.
- When preparing samples, hands need to be washed and gloves or utensils used to divide the food into taste testing portions. No bare hand contact with any food.
- Make sure food samples are not touched and put back.
- Cover samples when not in service. Consider individual covered containers.

Fact Sheet on  
thermometer  
calibration:



USDA FSIS  
Safe Minimum  
Internal  
Temperature  
Chart for  
safe cooking  
temperatures:



- Always ask parents' permission before serving children.
- Do not serve the following:
  1. Any cut produce or other perishable foods held at room temperature for more than 2 hours or above 90 degrees for over one hour.
  2. Undercooked meat, poultry, fish, or eggs.
  3. Unpasteurized dairy products, juices, or apple cider.
  4. Raw sprouts to high-risk individuals.
- Toss out any pre-portioned samples at the end. In addition, if the food was held without hot or cold temperature control it needs to be thrown out.

## References

Pennsylvania Department of Education, Division of Food and Nutrition. Classroom Food Preparation of Taste Testing Food Safety Tips. Revised, April 2020.

USDA and NSFMI. Best Practices: Handling Fresh Produce in Schools. Update 11/24/21

## Photo Credits

1. Image by Varun Kulkarni from Pixabay

## About the Author

Ann Hamilton is a Food Safety Field Specialist with the Food & Agriculture team. Ann works with farms, very small value-added food processors, food service workers, and consumers to support their food safety and food preservation efforts with science-based research and training.

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