



BALL STATE  
UNIVERSITY

**Environmental Health and Safety Office**

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**BSU FOOD  
SAFETY  
STANDARD**

## Private Gatherings: *Potluck (or Pitch-In) Events*

*Potluck* or *pitch-in* events are defined as private (closed) gatherings where homemade (or purchased) food is provided by group members--to be consumed only by the members. Any related organization or group fundraising efforts must be separate from the food-service event. Foods prepared in homes may only be served at private gatherings such as these.

Events open to the general university or public, or advertised to the general university or public, are **not** private events and will require submittal of a *BSU Temporary Event Food Service Form* for review and approval prior to the event. Events sponsored by a retail food establishment, or for which the food is prepared or held in the kitchen of a retail food establishment, are **not** potluck events. Members of the private gatherings may, however, purchase ready-to-eat foods from a retail food establishment as their food contribution to private gatherings such as pitch-ins.

*The following are qualifiers and restrictions for private events, including potluck or pitch-ins:*

1. The event name or notices should include *potluck* or *pitch-in* so that it is clear to everyone that home-prepared foods may be served. For instance, if a group of parents plans a meal for the Swim Team members, it might be named the "BSU Swim Team Potluck". Any flyers, e-mails, invitations, etc., must indicate the event is a private, pitch-in party.
2. Food service must be restricted to members of the *group*. A group will consist of department staff and their family members, a fraternal or student organization, an athletic team with coaches, staff, and family, and similar groups with exclusive membership and participation in the event.
3. There shall be no advertising of the food service event beyond that intended for the immediate group.
4. There shall be no invitations to individuals outside the group--such as a potluck designed to attract new members.
5. Any notices or communications for the event (i.e. flyers, e-mail, invitations, etc.) must indicate that the event is a private potluck or pitch-in.
6. All guests must be invited to bring a food dish or service item to share at the event at no charge.
7. Whether picked up or delivered, any perishable, ready-to-eat foods from a retail food establishment must be handled in accordance with the requirements on the following page for time and temperature control prior to and during service.
8. A notice stating the foods offered are *Home Prepared -- Not Inspected* should be prominently displayed at the pot luck or pitch-in event (unless all foods are provided through a retail establishment and only prepackaged, nonperishable foods -- canned sodas, bottled water, individually wrapped candy bars, desserts, chips--are provided by the group).
9. EHS may cancel the event if it is determined that these requirements have not been followed and/or if the event has only been called a private gathering or *potluck* to avoid meeting *Indiana Food Code* standards.

*Certainly we all regularly prepare meals for ourselves and their families in a safe and sanitary manner, but participation in a potluck meal for others requires additional precautions--particularly because of the quantities of food involved, number of consumers, transportation of the food, and safe holding and service practices in a group setting--often at locations not designed or equipped for sanitary food service.*

Please contact Brandon Clidence of the EHS Office if you have any questions on the scope of this *Standard*, or for information on other safe and sanitary measures for food handling and service at these events.

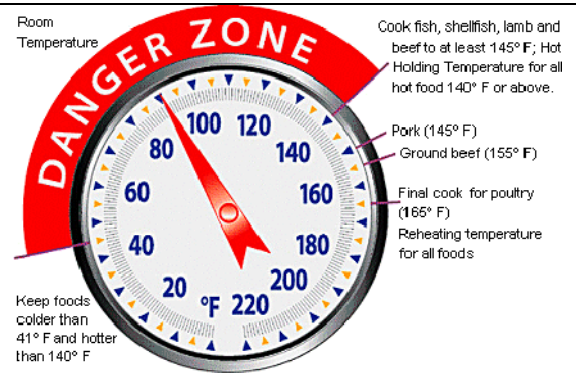
***RECOMMENDED SAFE FOOD SERVICE PRACTICES TO BE FOLLOWED AT POTLUCK OR PITCH-IN EVENTS ARE LISTED ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE:***

## Potluck and Pitch-in Food Safety at BSU

1. Always thoroughly wash hands before (and after) handling or preparing food. Do not prepare or handle food for the event if experiencing or recovering from nausea, diarrhea, or vomiting. Avoid preparing or serving food if suffering from a cold, other viral infection, nasal discharges, cough, etc; or, if you have open cuts or lesions on the hands or arms.
2. Clean and sanitize all preparation utensils, containers, and food contact surfaces as follows: (a) Wash with detergent; (b) Rinse with clean water; (c) Sanitize with a *solution* of household bleach of 1 Tablespoon of bleach to 1 gallon of water—dip utensils and spray or wipe on the surfaces; and, (d) allow the utensils or surfaces to air dry.

**3. Important: To ensure the safety of participants, keep perishable food cold (below 41° F) or hot (at least 135° F, 140° F is better) to slow bacterial growth. Never leave such foods at room temperature more than 2 hours. Be sure to cook raw foods (meats, poultry, etc.) to the temperatures noted on the right for at least 15 seconds.**

**Also: Reheating of pre-cooked foods to 165° F must be completed within 2 hours of removal from refrigeration, and cooling of hot foods must be accomplished as quickly as possible. Many foodborne illnesses are caused by allowing food time within the danger zone!**



4. **Perishable foods** are those that can promote the rapid growth of disease-causing or toxin-producing microorganisms (bacteria, viruses, etc.) and that require time and temperature control for food safety. **Perishable Food** examples include:

<i>Dairy Products--Milk, Cheese, Butter, etc.</i>	<i>Garlic in Oil Mixtures</i>	<i>Cooked Vegetables, Rice, and Pasta</i>
<i>Meats, Poultry, and Eggs</i>	<i>Fish and Shellfish</i>	<i>Homemade Sauces and Salad Dressings*</i>
<i>Cut Melons and Tomatoes</i>	<i>Raw Seed Sprouts</i>	<i>Cut Leafy vegetables (lettuce, spinach, etc.)</i>

(And any foods containing any of the above ingredients!)

*\*Most commercially prepared sauces/dressings are preserved and not perishable*

5. Perishable foods that have been prepared ahead of time must be kept refrigerated (or in ice chest) until it is time to serve. Hot food must be held at 135°F or above or must be reheated rapidly to 165° F immediately prior to, or at, the event.
6. Do not use warming trays or crock-pots to reheat food--use a microwave or oven. If an oven or microwave will not be available--prepare the dish close to the time of the event, wrap it in towels, and place in an insulated cooler. Warming trays and crock-pots should be used only to hold foods hot during service--not for reheating foods, as they often cannot get the food to a temperature of 165°F in a timely manner. All temperatures should be checked regularly with an accurate thermometer.
8. Identify the food(s) with labels as necessary if not in the original container. Prevent cross-contamination by ensuring that there is a utensil available for each dish or dip at all times, and keep the food(s) covered as much as possible.
9. Mark all containers holding *perishable* foods with the *discard* time (2 hours after removal from proper temperature) and remove any remaining food at that time as it will have been in the **danger** temperature zone for over 2 hours. It is best to dispose of such foods, but do not save these food dishes for later consumption unless they will first be reheated to 165°F (pathogen kill step). Minimize heating and cooling cycles for foods—again, to reduce exposure of the food to the temperature *danger zone* --where microorganisms grow most rapidly.
10. Also ensure that perishable foods delivered or transported from a retail food establishment are at the proper temperature ( $\leq 41^{\circ}\text{F}$  or  $\geq 135^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) upon arrival, mark the time 2 hours from their delivery on the food container(s), and discard any product remaining after that time has passed.
11. Do not touch ready-to-eat foods with bare hands – instead, use utensils, gloves, or food-grade paper products. If using gloves, change them and wash hands often—gloves can still allow cross-contamination of foods and surfaces.
12. Use single-service utensils and provide adequate trash containers in the “dining” area.

*It is strongly recommended that each dish include a card identifying the ingredients in case any of the guests have food allergies. Also, the preparer's name is helpful if anyone would like to get the recipe.*