

A Focus on Food Safety

## Food Safety at Festivals and Fairs

Now that July has arrived, it's that time of year when folks like to attend festivals and fairs. There are always fun things to see and do – artwork, music, games, and rides. But one of the biggest attractions is the wide variety of foods and drinks that are available.



Foodborne illness occurrences increase during the hot summer months, so it is even more important to follow good food safety practices, both as a vendor and as a consumer. There are several reasons why foodborne illnesses increase during the summer. One of them is that people are eating and cooking outside more often. Sometimes the usual safety controls that a kitchen provides are not available, like checking food temperatures, refrigeration, food handlers that are trained in food safety, and washing facilities.

Here are some things that food vendors should have or be doing. As a consumer, you can check to see if they are occurring before purchasing food from them.

- They should have a current food service license. It may be issued by the regulatory authority as a “temporary event” license. All vendors should be inspected at some time during the event, preferably at the beginning.
- Their trailer, booth, or food truck should look reasonably clean and in order. They may have items they are preparing out and on counters, especially during busy periods. But old-looking soil on counters, spills left on the floor, or grease buildup may be signs of a poor cleaning program.
- They should wear gloves, or use other barriers between hands and food product, such as tongs, utensils, or deli papers when touching ready-to-eat foods. Note that most health departments do not require wearing of gloves when the handled foods will receive further cooking, such as the pizza dough that will be going into a hot oven.
- They use a thermometer to check the doneness of poultry and meats, and to monitor foods they are holding.
- They are keeping hot foods hot, by using roasters, warming units, or temperature controlled display units such as a revolving hot dog cooker. Keeping cold foods cold can be accomplished with ice, a cooler, or a temperature controlled holding unit.
- They are practicing division of tasks – the person taking money should not be the person who puts your hot dog on a bun. Money can contaminate the hands. If the money handler is also touching food, there should be a barrier between their hands and your food.
- You observe them washing their hands and work surfaces. All food service operations are required to have a hand washing station, whether working from a permanent building or a temporary food stand. Work surfaces where food comes into contact should be wiped down with a sanitizer solution\*.

There are some important steps that you, as a consumer, should take to protect yourself and your family when attending festivals, fairs, carnivals, or rodeos.

### Wash Hands Often!

- Find out where hand washing stations are located
- Always wash your hands right after petting any animals, touching the animal enclosure, and exiting the animal area, even if you did not touch an animal. This is especially important for young children, who may have petted an animal without your knowledge.
- Always wash hands after using the restroom, after playing a game or going on a ride, before eating and drinking, before preparing food and drinks, after changing diapers, and after removing soiled clothes or shoes.
- Take hand sanitizers and disposable wipes with you, in case there aren't any places to wash your hands.
- Wash hands with soap and clean running water for at least 20 seconds.

### Report Illness

If you think you may have a foodborne illness, report it to your local health department, even if you have already recovered. They are an important link in the food safety system. Outbreaks are often detected because people call in to report they have been sick. If a public health official contacts you to find out more about an illness you had, or one that took place at an event you attended, your help is valuable and may be needed, even if you are not sick.

As you head out to summer fairs, festivals, and carnivals, take in the sights, the sounds, and delicious foods, but not the foodborne illness! And don't forget the sunblock!

Sources: [www.cdc.gov/features/fairsandfood](http://www.cdc.gov/features/fairsandfood); [communityhealth.mayoclinic.org](http://communityhealth.mayoclinic.org); [livesmartohio.osu.edu](http://livesmartohio.osu.edu)



Sharks don't usually hunt people. When they do, it's often because they mistake us for sea turtles or other prey. But the reality is, more people die each year from accidents involving Christmas lights than shark attacks. Still, if they've been spotted in the water, stay away. And don't take a dip in the ocean early in the morning, at dusk, or at night. That's when they tend to look for food.

Ask the Expert: For any Food Safety or Sanitation questions or concerns, contact Linda Wilt via email - [LWilt@bhcinc.com](mailto:LWilt@bhcinc.com)