

Brilliant Buffets & Party Platters

A popular way to celebrate holidays or any party occasion is to invite friends and family to a buffet. However, this type of food service, where foods may be out for long periods leaves the door open for uninvited guests -- bacteria that cause foodborne illness. Here are some tips for a safe and brilliant buffet:

Safe Food Handling

Always wash your hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds before and after handling food. Clean kitchen surfaces, dishes and utensils with hot water and soap. Always serve food on clean plates -- never those previously holding raw meat or poultry. Bacteria that may have been present in raw meat or poultry can cross-contaminate the food to be served.

Ready to Cook a Feast

If you are cooking foods ahead of time for your party, be sure to cook foods thoroughly to safe internal temperatures.

Keep Hot Foods HOT And Cold Foods COLD

Hot foods should be held at 140 °F or warmer. On the buffet table you can keep hot foods hot with chafing dishes, slow cookers and warming trays. Cold foods should be held at 40 °F or colder. Keep foods cold by nesting dishes in bowls of ice. If you buy party trays at the store, remove lid and fill with ice. Put the tray on the lid for a handy cooling station. Bacteria can also multiply quickly in moist desserts that contain dairy products. Keep eggnog, cheesecakes, cream pies and cakes with whipped-cream or cream-cheese frostings refrigerated until serving time.

Safely Sauced

Some sauces, dressings and even dessert recipes contain uncooked eggs. If your homemade recipes call for uncooked eggs, you can modify them by using pasteurized eggs, pasteurized egg product or cooking the egg mixture on the stovetop to 160 °F. Then follow the recipe's directions.

The 2-Hour Rule

Foods should not sit at room temperature for more than two hours. Keep track of how long foods have been sitting on the buffet table and discard anything there two hours or more.

Storing the Smorgasbord

Divide cooked foods into shallow containers to store in the refrigerator or freezer until serving. This encourages rapid, even cooling. Reheat foods to 165 °F. Arrange and serve food on several small platters rather than on one large platter. You can prepare extra serving platters and dishes ahead of time, store them in the refrigerator or keep them hot in the oven (set at approximately 200 to 250 °F) prior to serving.

If you have questions or concerns about food safety, contact:

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854). TTY 1-800-256-7072.
- The Fight BAC![®] Web site at www.fightbac.org.
- Gateway to Government Food Safety Information at www.foodsafety.gov

The Partnership for Food Safety Education is a non-profit organization and creator and steward of the Fight BAC![®] consumer education program. The Partnership is dedicated to providing the public with science-based, actionable recommendations for the prevention of foodborne illness.

You may contact the AgriLife Extension Office at 903-473-4580 or visit us at rains.agrilife.org. We are also on Facebook at [Facebook.com/pages/Rains-County-Family-Consumer-Sciences](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Rains-County-Family-Consumer-Sciences). Go and “Like” our page to keep up with the latest news, events, and programs offered by Family & Consumer Sciences in Rains County.

Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating