

factsheet

Safe Food Outdoors

Nova Scotia is amply blessed with all the ingredients for great outdoor activities — sun, wilderness, beaches, lakes and ocean. Whether you hike, camp, boat or just relax at the cottage, you can participate in outdoor recreation that fits your life style.

Many of these activities share one thing in common — food. If your food is not properly handled, these activities could end with a food-borne illness. Following some simple advice from the Food Safety Section of the NS Department of Agriculture and Fisheries can help you avoid turning a pleasant outdoor adventure into one you would rather forget.

✓ First, there are some general tips that apply when taking foods to the great outdoors:

PLAN AHEAD

Carefully consider your menu and take along only food you need. Keep Hot Foods Hot and Cold Foods Cold.

- If taking perishable food like meat, poultry, salads or sandwiches, place them in a cooler with a cold source. Consider taking along some foods that do not require refrigeration — peanut butter, canned tuna, canned meats, dried meats, hard cheeses, fresh fruits, vegetables, breads, and crackers.
- Use a sturdy insulated cooler, with block ice, frozen gel packs or water frozen in plastic or paper cartons for your cold source. Put cold beverages in a separate cooler as it will be opened more often.
- If you plan to eat takeout food such as fried chicken, you should eat it within two hours of purchase, or purchase it the day before and chill in your refrigerator before packing in your cooler.
- It is difficult to transport foods hot without a source of heat. Foods in a thermos or insulated dishes will remain hot for several hours. For longer periods it is better to chill cooked food before leaving home.



Safe Food
for the
Great Outdoors

✓ PACKING IT UP

Avoid cross contamination by keeping uncooked meat or poultry separated from cooked or ready-to-eat foods such as fruit.

- Start with cold food. Pack directly from the refrigerator or freezer and pack in reverse-use order. First foods packed are last to be used. You may want to pre-cool the cooler by filling with ice or ice water about an hour before you pack it.
- Use tightly-sealed plastic containers for foods that may drip or leak, particularly raw meat, poultry or fish. Store raw meat, poultry and fish in the bottom of the cooler.
- For longer trips, take an extra cooler — one with food for immediate use like lunch or snacks and the other for food that will be used later. Replenish ice as it melts.
- Place coolers in the passenger area of the car and not in the trunk.
- If taking uncooked meat or poultry to barbecue take along a thermometer to check the temperatures to make sure it is thoroughly cooked. Hamburgers and other ground meats must be cooked to an internal temperature of 71°C (160°F). Ground poultry must be cooked to 74°C (165°F) Whole poultry should be cooked to 82°C (180°F) measured in the thigh and breasts or pieces should be cooked to 77°C (170°F). Large portions of beef such as roasts and steaks can be cooked to 63°C (145°F) for medium rare, 71°C (160°F) for medium, or 77°C (170°F) for well done.
- If taking meat or poultry to cook at a picnic or other outing, do not partially cook ahead of time as this allows bacteria to survive and grow to the point where subsequent cooking may not destroy them.



✓ KEEP IT CLEAN

- You should always wash your hands and utensils with hot water and soap. If you are going where water is not available take it along with you. Disposable wipes or a moist clean washcloth wrapped in plastic can be used for cleaning surfaces and hands where water is not available.

✓ WATER SUPPLY

Access to a safe (potable) water supply may be difficult. Unless you know that the supply is safe, you should take along bottled water or water from a tested source.

- When hiking or camping do not depend on water from lakes or streams even if it looks clean. Even remote streams may be contaminated by animals further up stream.
- When in remote or wilderness areas the best way to make sure that water is safe is by boiling it. Bring the water to a rolling boil and continue to boil for two minutes.
- Water purification tablets are available for treating water. Some bacteria and parasites such as *Cryptosporidium* and *Giardia* are not removed by purification tablets and a water filter (at least one micron or smaller) should be used. Both purification tablets and filtering equipment are available at most camping supply stores.

✓ CAMPING OR HIKING

- When hiking, choose easy-to-carry foods that are lightweight and do not require refrigeration. Some foods are dried meat or soup mixes, peanut butter, canned tuna or meats, dehydrated foods and dried fruit or nuts.
- If taking perishable foods it is important to keep the food cold. Refrigerate or freeze food the night before and pack it with a cold source such as frozen gel packs or frozen box drinks. As the drink boxes melt they can be used as beverages.
- When camping, keep your cooler in a shady spot. Keep it covered with a tarp or blanket and remember to replenish the ice.

✓ AT THE BEACH OR BOATING

Perishable foods left out of the refrigerator should be consumed within two hours. In warm, summer weather with temperatures above 30°C (86°F) foods should be eaten within one hour.

- The sun on the beach or the water can be very hot. It is important to keep foods in the cooler, which should be placed in the shade or covered with a blanket. Take along plenty of ice.
- Take along moist wash cloths or towelettes for cleaning hands.
- Caution: Be aware of the danger of eating raw shellfish — you should not do it.
- If eating at food stands along the beach make sure that hot foods are hot and cold foods are cold and all foods are thoroughly cooked.

For further information on food safety visit the
Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture
Food Safety website at
<http://www.gov.ns.ca/nsaf/foodsafety/>