

Food handling guidelines for Green Food Experience events

Following a few golden rules can prevent the spread of foodborne illness and make your Green Food Experience (GFE) event safe and enjoyable for everyone.

At the store or market

- Choose fruit and vegetables that are not bruised or damaged.
- If you buy pre-cut fruits and vegetables, choose items that are refrigerated or kept on ice.
- Separate fruits and vegetables from raw meat, poultry, and seafood in your shopping cart and in your grocery bags.

Wash your hands and surfaces often

Germs that cause food poisoning can survive in many places and spread around your kitchen. To reduce chances of food poisoning:

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm or cold water before, during, and after preparing food and before eating. Remember to wash your hands after visiting the toilet or touching the garbage.
- Although the GFE events include only plant-based food, you might be in a kitchen where meat and other animal-sourced food are present. If you handle uncooked meat, chicken and other poultry, seafood, flour, or eggs, wash your hands thoroughly.
- After preparing each food item, wash your utensils, cutting boards, and countertops with hot, soapy water.
- Wash fruits and vegetables under running water—even if you do not plan to eat the peel. Germs on the peel or skin can get inside fruits and vegetables when you cut them.
- Washing fruits and vegetables with soap, detergent, or commercial produce wash is not recommended. Do not use bleach solutions or other disinfecting products on fruits and vegetables.
- After you have washed them, dry fruit or vegetables with a clean paper towel.

Separate: Don't cross-contaminate

The golden rule here is to separate raw food from cooked food.

- Raw meat is an important source of dangerous bacteria, so if you are organising your event in an environment where meat is also present, please keep meat (especially raw meat) separate from the food you are preparing.

- Thaw frozen food safely in the refrigerator, in cold water, or in the microwave. Never thaw food on the counter because bacteria multiply quickly in the parts of the food that reach room temperature.

Cook thoroughly

The safest produce to eat is cooked; the next safest is washed. When cooked foods cool to room temperature, microbes begin to proliferate. The longer the wait, the greater the risk. To be on the safe side, eat cooked foods just as soon as they come off the heat.

- Food is safely cooked when the internal temperature reaches at least 70 °C. This is enough to kill germs that can make you sick.
- Bring foods like soups and stews to a boil to ensure they have reached 70 °C.
- Reheat food thoroughly.
- Cook sprouts thoroughly to reduce the risk of illness. Eating raw or undercooked sprouts may lead to food poisoning. That's because the warm, humid conditions needed to grow sprouts are also ideal for germs to multiply.

Refrigerate promptly

If you plan to store cooked foods:

- Package warm or hot food into several clean, shallow containers and refrigerate.
- Refrigerate within 2 hours from cooking.

These guidelines have been adapted from the resources below

1. WHO "Golden Rules" for Safe Food Preparation - PAHO/WHO | Pan American Health Organization. Available at <https://www.paho.org/en/health-emergencies/who-golden-rules-safe-food-preparation>. Last accessed 14/04/2023.
2. USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service US Department of Agriculture. Safe food handling and preparation. Available at <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation>. Last accessed 14/04/2023.
3. Fruit and vegetables safety. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/communication/steps-healthy-fruits-veggies.html>. Last accessed 14/04/2023