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News Release

*For Immediate Release*

### **Fourth of July Food Safety Tips**

Few things are more American, or more fun, than grilling meat and holding a picnic on the Fourth of July. Please keep in mind a few basic food safety tips when cooking food on the grill and celebrating our nation's independence with family and friends.

Especially when eating outdoors during warm weather, it is important to take extra precautions and practice safe food handling when preparing perishable foods such as meat, poultry, seafood and egg products. Warm evenings may be ideal for outdoor picnics and barbecues, but they also provide a perfect environment for bacteria and other pathogens in food to multiply rapidly and cause food-borne illness.

- Always wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food.
- When marinating meat, always do so in the refrigerator. Don't use sauce that was used to marinate raw meat or poultry on cooked food. Reserve a portion of the unused marinade to use as a sauce.
- When grilling foods, preheat the coals on your grill for 20 to 30 minutes, or until the coals are lightly coated with ash.
- Use a food thermometer to ensure that food reaches a safe internal temperature. Ground meat of all types, such as hamburgers, should be cooked to 160 degrees. Cook cuts of pork and beef to 145 degrees, and add a three-minute rest time before carving or consuming. This will result in a product that is both safe and at its best quality—juicy and tender. Poultry must reach a temperature of 165 degrees. Fish should be opaque and flake easily.
- When taking foods off the grill, do not put cooked food items back on the same plate that held raw food, unless it has been washed with hot water and soap first. In hot weather (above 90 degrees) foods should never sit out for more than one hour before going in the refrigerator.
- Whether you're cooking out in the backyard or on a picnic, a basic rule of thumb is to always keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot.
- A full cooler will maintain its cold temperatures longer than one that is partially filled so it is important to pack plenty of extra ice or freezer packs to ensure a constant cold temperature. Keep the cooler out of the direct sun. Keep drinks in a separate cooler from foods. The beverage cooler will be opened frequently while the food cooler stays cold.
- Finally, avoid binge drinking. Defined as five or more drinks on a single occasion for men or four or more drinks on a single occasion for women, generally within about 2 hours. Binge drinking is a dangerous pattern of alcohol consumption. More than 15 percent of U.S. adults report binge drinking. It is most common in men, adults in the 18-

34 age range, and people with household incomes of \$75,000 or more. Most people who binge drink are not alcohol-dependent or alcoholics.