

# COMPLETE MEALS TOGO

MEALS-ON-WHEELS- CATERING- WEDDINGS  
TAILGATEPARTIES- PICNICS- GRADUATIONS

In today's busy world, many convenience foods, including complete meals-to-go are experiencing runaway popularity. Some are hot and some are cold. Most are eaten immediately, although there are times when ready-prepared foods are purchased in advance to be eaten at a later time.

**All foods are perishable and can cause illness when mishandled. Proper handling is necessary to keep food safe.**

## THE 2-HOUR RULE

Harmful germs can grow rapidly in the "DANGER ZONE" between 40°F and 140°F. So remember the 2-Hour Rule. Throw away any perishable foods left at room temperature longer than 2 hours. If you are eating outdoors at a picnic or cookout where temperatures are over 90°F, discard after 1 hour.



## Purchased or Delivered Hot.

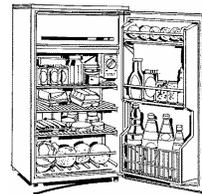
### Eating Within 2 Hours?

Pick up food **HOT** and keep it **HOT**. Eat and enjoy your food within 2 hours to prevent harmful bacteria (or germs) from multiplying in the food.



## Not Eating Within 2 Hours?

Keeping foods **warm is not enough**. Harmful bacteria grow rapidly between 40°F and 140°F. (Use a food thermometer to be sure.) Stuffing and side dishes must also stay **hot**. Covering with foil will help your food stay moist.



## Eating Much Later?

It's not a good idea to try and keep foods hot longer than 2 hours. They will be safer, taste better, and have more vitamin content if you:

- Divide meat or poultry into small portions to refrigerate or freeze.
- Refrigerate or freeze gravy, potatoes, and other vegetables in shallow containers.



## Reheating?

You may wish to reheat your meal. Heat thoroughly to 165°F until hot and steaming. Bring gravy to a rolling boil. If heating in a microwave oven, cover food and rotate dish so it heats evenly. Inadequate heating in the microwave can contribute to illness. Check your microwave owner's manual for complete instructions.

KEEP HOT FOOD **HOT**  
KEEP COLD FOOD **COLD!**

# COLD FOODS

## KEEP COLD FOODS COLD

Refrigerate or freeze immediately. Cold food should be held at 40°F or colder.

### BUFFET SERVICE

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. Otherwise, use small serving trays and replace them often.

### PICNICS, TAILGATE PARTIES, & OTHER OCCASIONS

When meals are purchased to eat at a later time, like a picnic, a cooler with ice can act as a refrigerator. The cooler should be well-insulated and packed with ice or freezer packs. Remember the 2-Hour Rule when food is removed from the cooler.

For FOOD SAFETY information:  
USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline  
1-800-535-4555

or

Your Navajo County Health Department  
Holbrook (928) 524-4750  
&  
Show Low (928) 532-6050

## WHAT TO DO WITH THOSE LEFTOVERS?

When the party's over, discard any foods that remained on the buffet table for more than 2 hours. Other leftovers can be refrigerated or frozen in shallow containers. Leftovers in the refrigerator should be used within 4 days. In the freezer they are safe indefinitely, but most will have best quality if used within 2-4 months.

### STORAGE IN THE REFRIGERATOR (40°F or below)

Cooked meat or poultry.....	3 to 4 days
Fried chicken.....	3 to 4 days
Pizza.....	3 to 4 days
Food items such as Egg, tuna, macaroni, potato salad.....	3 to 5 days
Luncheon meats.....	3 to 5 days
Gravy.....	1 to 2 days

Foods stored longer may begin to spoil or become unsafe to eat.

### STORAGE IN THE FREEZER (0°F or below)

Cooked meat or poultry.....	3 to 6 months
Fried chicken.....	4 months
Pizza, luncheon	1 to 2 months

Foods with mayonnaise do not freeze well. Foods kept frozen longer will still be safe but may be dry & not taste good (freezer burn).

### WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!

# Safe Handling of Complete Meals to Go



HOLBROOK SENIOR CITIZENS CENTER COOK  
MRS. MARGARET YELLOWHAIR AND DRIVER  
MR. JOHN HATCH GET READY FOR ANOTHER  
'MEALS-ON-WHEELS' DELIVERY.

*Food Safety Information  
provided by your  
NAVAJO COUNTY  
HEALTH DEPARTMENT*