

POTLUCKS - THE DOS AND DO NOTS

Illinois Food Handling Regulation Enforcement Act PA-093-1039

What is a potluck?

A potluck is a communal gathering where each guest or group contributes a different, often homemade, food dish to be shared. Events that meet the definition and requirements of a potluck under the Act are not regulated by the Health Department. In order to be considered a potluck, the event must be private and must not take place in a licensed food establishment.



An establishment dealing in the sale of food and beverages may not sponsor a potluck event for the public, as the consumer may wrongly assume that these items have been stored and prepared in a licensed kitchen. Potluck foods may not be brought into the kitchen of an establishment that holds a food safety license, as items prepared in a home kitchen are not inspected to ensure high standards of food safety and sanitation have been met.

Requirements under the Public Act:

1. People are gathered to share food at the event.
2. There is no compensation provided to people for bringing food to the event.
3. There is no charge for any food or beverage provided at the event.
4. The event is not conducted for commercial purposes.
5. It is generally understood by the participants at the event that neither the food nor the facilities have been inspected by the State or a local certified public health department.
6. The event is not held on public property or made available to the public.

Dos:

- Clean and sanitize equipment and surfaces before preparing food for the potluck.

- Wash your hands properly before, during, and after the food preparation or handling.
- Wash vegetables before food preparation or handling.
- Maintain hot foods above 135F and cold foods at 41F or below to prevent bacterial growth (avoid the Temperature Danger Zone).
- Wrap or cover food to protect food from contamination during transport or storage.
- Bring extra utensils for serving and wash hands thoroughly before serving food at the potluck.
- Ask participants of the potluck for allergen information, or bring an ingredients list with your dish to keep your guests informed.

Do Nots:

- Don't prepare food if you have been ill in the days leading up to the potluck, or on the day of the potluck.
- Don't serve time/temperature controlled for safety (TCS) foods if the foods have been held in the temperature danger zone (41F to 135F).
- Don't use a slow cooker to reheat TCS foods. Rapidly reheat foods in a microwave or on a stove-top.



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