

'Econo -Eating'

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All people who handle food want to do it safely. No one wants to have the "flu" or make others sick. But sometimes we do things that make the possibility of illness very likely. We do these things without knowing what effect

they will have. In summer there are lots of gatherings. Family reunions, potlucks with friends or co-workers, camping or picnicking with friends or family. I can remember one huge family reunion our family attended. It was one of those multi-family gatherings with the great-aunts and second

cousins you never knew you had. We went to a big lakeside resort where we had primitive little cabins. It was a great adventure for me. I was probably eight or ten, old enough to have freedom to run and play and not so old that family things were "boring." A family potluck was one of the major events and the luck was definitely not with us. One and probably more than one of the dishes carried food-

borne illness. It becomes a major catastrophe when this happens in a large group. It's no fun to be sick at all but when you're a traveler it's especially miserable. There are three simple food handling rules that you need to follow. Keep hot foods hot, cold foods cold and all foods clean. The germs that commonly cause foodborne illness all grow rapidly if they have food, warm temperatures and

moisture. The same precautions are important with all of these bacteria. Germs grow better in some foods than they do in others. Meat, poultry, fish, combination dishes (especially those that are handled a lot), cooked vegetables, some dairy products like custard pies and puddings, raw eggs or egg dishes are all great places for germs to grow. Though mayonnaise is often blamed, it is

not the culprit. It does provide moisture and is usually used on foods that have been handled a lot. Lack of refrigeration has allowed the bacteria to grow. Bacteria comes from various sources. All of us have germs on hands, counters, utensils and even on the food. All things that come in contact with food should be kept clean with soap and water. Some things, such as cutting boards

used for cutting raw meat, should be washed with soap and water and then disinfected with a solution of bleach. Colds, sinus infections, skin cuts, hang nails and even pets can provide a big supply of germs without even seeming important. Most of these bacteria or germs don't create a problem unless they are allowed to multiply. Bacteria can multiply at temperatures from 45 degrees

to 125 degrees. They multiply rapidly from 60 degrees to 120 degrees so room temperature is dangerous. For a margin of safety, cold foods should be refrigerated at 40 degrees or below and hot foods held at 140 degrees or above. Bacteria will grow to high enough levels in two or three hours to make you sick. So when the food was prepared for our family potluck and left on the tables all afternoon, many of the

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