

# Community Organization Functions

A community organization function (COF) is a public event where home prepared food may be served. To qualify as a community organization function, the event must meet all of the following requirements.

- It is open to the general public, for example advertised as “Everyone welcome!”.
- It occurs rarely or infrequently.
- It must not be part of a special event, like a fair, festival or exhibition.
- It must be organized by a not-for-profit community organization, like a community or multicultural association, church, service or recreational club, school, or sports team.
- It is operated to raise money for the community organization or another charitable purpose.
- It is catered by volunteers who receive no or minimal payment.
- It runs no longer than two (2) days unless approved by Environmental Public Health (EPH).

Examples of community organization functions include community sports events, fall harvest suppers and wild game dinners.

## Notification

The organizer of a community organization function must

- Notify EPH of the event by submitting a completed Community Organization Function Notification **at least fourteen (14)** days prior to the function.
- Notify attendees of the community organization function that home-prepared foods are being served.

## Ensuring a Successful Community Organization Function

Practice good food safety when planning and preparing food for your community organization function. Most foodborne illnesses from large community events are caused by:

1. cooling food too slowly
2. keeping hot foods below 60°C (140°F) while transporting or serving
3. allowing sick people to prepare and serve food
4. preparing food too far in advance, such as a day or more ahead of time
5. allowing cross-contamination i.e. storing raw food near cooked food
6. leaving high-risk food in the Danger Zone, between 4°C (40°F) and 60°C (140°F)

The following food safety tips will help ensure a safe and successful community event.

### **FOOD HANDLING REQUIREMENTS**

The COF organizer and voluntary caterers preparing the food must ensure that food is handled in a clean and safe manner, at home or in approved food facilities.

- Home-prepared foods must be prepared and donated only by members of the community organization hosting the function.
- Unpasteurized milk and unfit foods cannot be served or used as ingredients in food items.
- Pets must be kept out of the kitchen or vehicles when food is being prepared, served or transported.

### **Food Handler Hygiene**

- Wash hands often with hot soapy water, especially after using the washroom and before handling any food.
- Keep hair under control.
- Avoid habits that contaminate food or food preparation areas, like licking fingers, biting fingernails, smoking or wearing aprons outside the food preparation areas.
- Cover cuts and/or sores with a bandage and glove before handling food.
- Prepare food only if you are feeling well. Do not prepare food if you are vomiting, have diarrhea or jaundice.
- Wear clean clothing and footwear.

### **FOOD SAFETY BASICS**

#### **Plan Ahead**

- Select a location or facility that meets your needs. Ask yourself:
  - Does it have adequate storage space in the refrigerator and freezer?
  - Does it have the cooking and hot-holding equipment you need?
  - Is it clean?
- Select a person who knows good food safety practices to manage your function.
- Ensure the water source you are using is safe.

## Keep Food Safe During Preparation

- Serve food as soon as possible. Prepare food just before your event.
- Use tongs and other utensils to prepare or serve food. Wash your hands and change gloves between tasks, if you are using gloves.
- Keep raw meat away from ready-to-eat foods like lettuce, fruit and bread. Never place cooked food back on the same plate or cutting board that held raw food.
- Wash and sanitize cutting boards and other food preparation surfaces to prevent cross contamination. You can make a simple sanitizing solution by mixing 1/2 teaspoon of household bleach into one litre of water.

### *Manual Method - 2 Compartment Sink*

1. Wash with a warm detergent solution
  2. Rinse under tap with clean warm water
  3. Sanitize by immersing for two (2) minutes in 100 ppm available chlorine in warm water  
(½ teaspoon bleach for every 1 litre of water)
  4. Air-dry (if need immediately, leave 2 minutes and dry with paper towel)
- Cook food to 74°C (165°F). Check the internal temperature of meat, poultry and casseroles using a thermometer.
  - Cook food thoroughly. Never partially cook food for finishing later. Wash fresh fruit and vegetables before preparing or serving.

## Keep Food Out of the “Danger Zone”

The Danger Zone is the range of temperatures between 4°C (40°F) and 60°C (140°F). Bacteria in food can grow and multiply quickly at these temperatures.

- Keep hot food hot, at least 60°C (140°F) or above.
- Keep cold food cold, at least 4°C (40°F) or below.
- Keep high-risk foods, like meat, poultry and casseroles at Danger Zone temperatures for no more than two (2) hours.
- Defrost or thaw foods in the refrigerator, under cold running water, or in the microwave. Never leave high-risk foods to thaw at room temperature.
- Divide foods into smaller portions to allow for quicker cooling. For example, cut cooked poultry and roasts into smaller portions before placing in the refrigerator.

## Keep Food Safe When Transporting

- Keep hot food hot by using insulated containers, or by tightly wrapping the food container in several layers of tin foil or a clean heavy blanket.
- Keep cold food cold in an insulated cooler with ice or freezer packs.
- Pack high-risk foods just before you leave, and do not open them until serving time.
- Unload hot and cold foods first, and immediately place them in hot holding equipment or coolers.

### Keep Food Safe When Serving

- Keep serving portions small if not kept in hot or cold holding equipment.
- Serve hot food from chafing dishes, pre-heated steam tables, warming trays and/or slow cookers, if possible. Never place food in a steam table, if the food has not been cooked or reheated to 74°C (165°F) first.
- Use clean and sanitized dishes and utensils to serve food. Replace empty platters and dishes with freshly filled ones. Never add new food to a serving dish or platter that is partially empty.
- Check food temperatures often.

### Keep Leftover Food Safe

- Discard leftover food that has been left out at room temperature for more than two (2) hours.
- Refrigerate or freeze food that was not served.
- Follow the rule, “When in doubt, throw it out”.
- Allow leftover to be taken home only by members of the host organization.

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Contact us at 1-833-476-4743 or [submit a request online](#) at [ahs.ca/eph](https://ahs.ca/eph).

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# PLEASE BE ADVISED

Food has been prepared and  
donated by community  
members.

Food may not have been  
prepared in an approved food  
establishment.



Contact us at 1-833-476- 4743 or  
submit a request  
online at [ahs.ca/eph](https://ahs.ca/eph).

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