

A few words on food safety....

Dear chili cooks,

We appreciate your participation in the New Jersey State Chili and Salsa Cook-off. You are the key to our success. Along with that recognition also comes responsibility. We would like to take a few moments to discuss the issue of food safety. Thousands of chili heads from all over will be attending the cook-off and gobbling up your finest chili and salsa. To make the food as safe as possible we would like to point out to you a few guidelines:

- Keep foods out of the food danger zone. Bacteria multiply most quickly in the food danger zone which is between 40F and 140F.
- Keep you cold ingredients cold and your hot food hot. Sounds simple but not as easy as it seems when working out of your booth or traveling great distances in your car.
- People's Choice chili and salsa can be made ahead of time and brought to the event. Most folks don't have the facilities at home to make large batches of food. The problem they run into is after the food is cooked, where do you store it? You need to make sure the food is chilled as quickly as possible to keep the food out of that danger zone and that requires large refrigeration space. Cooling and storing product in shallow pans works the best. Deep pots and pans will not permit sufficient cooling and could be a vehicle for a potential food borne illness.
- Reheat foods prepared in advance to at least 165F before they are served.
- Never cross contaminate! Raw and cooked foods should not share the same surfaces such as cutting boards or knives. Properly sanitize between tasks.
- Remember the old saying, "When in doubt, throw it out". Taking a chance on serving foods that may be not wholesome is definitely not cool.
- The best defense against food borne pathogens is to wash your hands thoroughly and frequently.

We appreciate your continued support and thank you in advance for your commitment to serving safe and wholesome foods to our chili and salsa eating public.

The NJ State Chili and Salsa Cook-off Committee