



Planning For Carried Meals

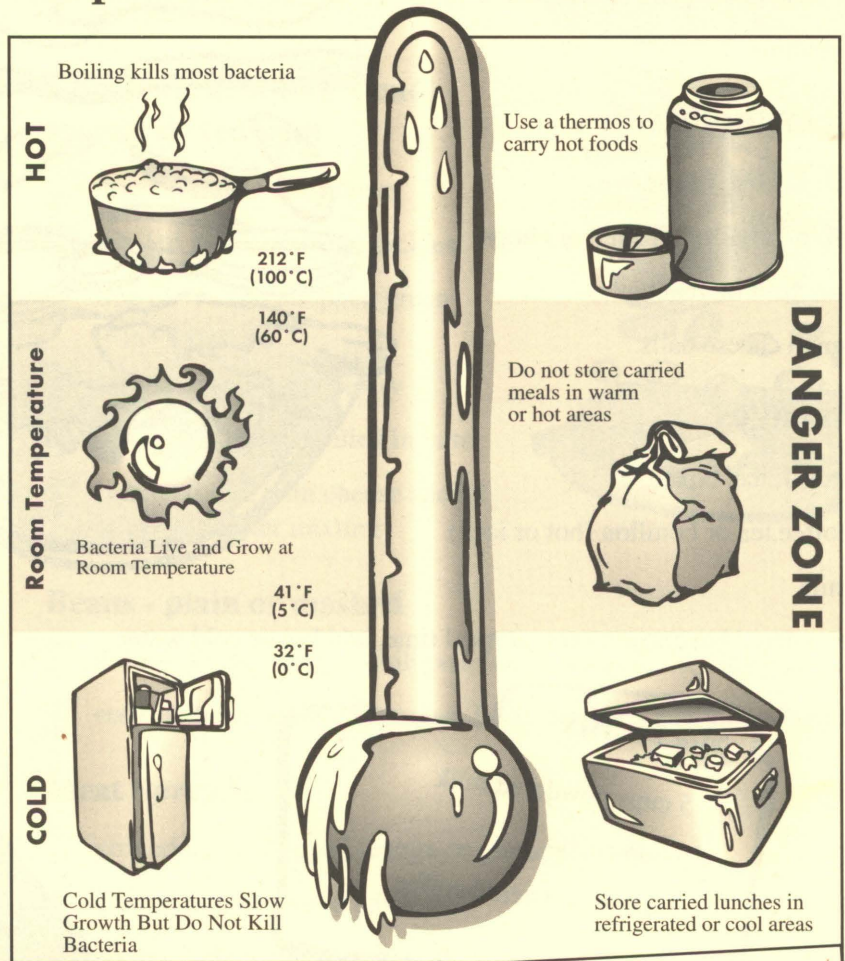
Ann A. Hertzler and Tim Roberts*

Plan Safety

High protein and high moisture foods are the ones most likely to spoil. The chart shows foods by protein and moisture content. Hot sun and warm or hot rooms can result in unsafe or poor quality food.

Even if foods can be heated at work on a burner, in an oven, or in a microwave, carried meals need cool temperatures until meal time. For food safety and enjoyment, carried meals should be stored away from warm or hot temperatures.

Keep Hot Foods Hot & Cold Foods Cold



Cool Storage Temperature

High Protein/Low Moisture
cheese, peanut butter, powdered milk, dried meat, freeze dried meat, powdered eggs, raisins, nuts, and snack bars

High Protein/High Moisture
unopened canned meat and puddings

Low Protein/Low Moisture
breads, cereals

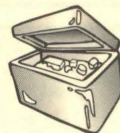
Low Protein/High Moisture
raw fruit, raw vegetables



Cold Storage Temperature

High Protein/High Moisture
cottage cheese, eggs, fluid milk, meat, chicken, fish, salads, desserts, or mixtures

- custards or puddings
- lemon meringue pie
- deviled eggs
- meat, fish, egg or chicken salad



Mayonnaise

Although mayonnaise is often blamed for food poisoning, it seldom causes food poisoning or spoilage. Commercial mayonnaise is mostly vinegar (acid) and oil emulsified by a small amount of egg yolk. The high acid level means that bacteria do not grow in mayonnaise.

Mixing spoons can transfer bacteria into the mayonnaise. Usually the bacteria will live only a short time because of the acid. But if the mayonnaise is soon mixed with other food, this may be long enough to contaminate those foods. The acidity of mayonnaise will not make unsafe food safe to eat. Use safe food handling habits.





*Extension Specialist, Human Nutrition, Foods, and Exercise, Virginia Tech; Extension Specialist, Food Safety, Virginia Tech, respectively.

Plan Nutrition

Fit carried meal choices into a day's nutrition plan. Since the body needs many nutrients, plan a meal with at least three of the five groups shown in The Food Guide Pyramid. Build a safe Pyramid Meal.





Many menus can be planned around finger foods, salads, hot entrees, soups, sandwiches, or other choices.

Salads





-  fish, poultry, and meat salads
-  greens, raw vegetables and fruits
-  grated, cubed, and sliced cheese
-  croutons



Finger foods

-  hard cooked eggs
-  fried or baked chicken or chops
-  raw fruit or vegetables
-  small cheese balls.



Beverages

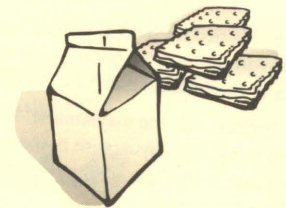
-  fruit Juice, boxed
-  coffee, tea or bouillon (hot or iced)
-  milk
-  powdered beverage mixes; at meal time, add hot or cold water

Mocha Mix






- 5 cups powdered milk
- 1 cup cocoa
- 1/4 cup powdered coffee

Soups

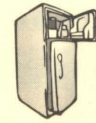
-  dry, powdered
-  hot soup from home



Desserts

-  sunflower seeds and raisins
-  yogurt
-  fresh fruit
-  nuts with chopped dried fruit
-  popcorn sprinkled with cheese

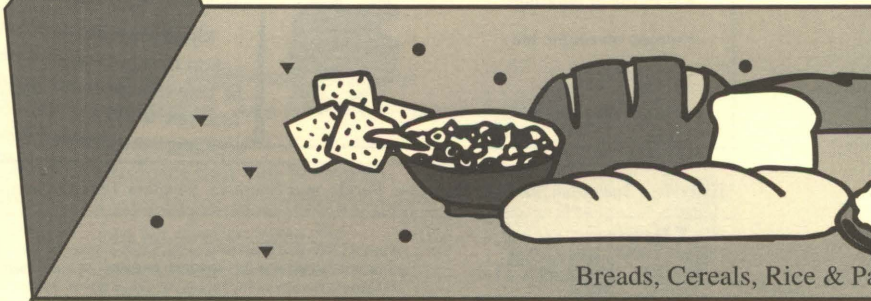
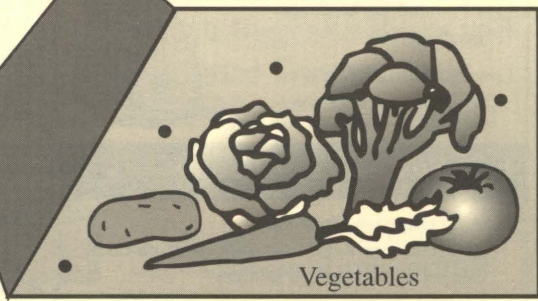
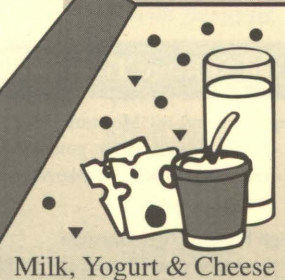
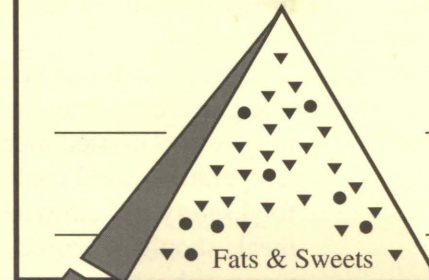
Build a Meal



Cold



Cool



Breads, Cereals, Rice & Pasta

Pyramid Meal



Hot

Breads, Cereals, Rice
and Pastas

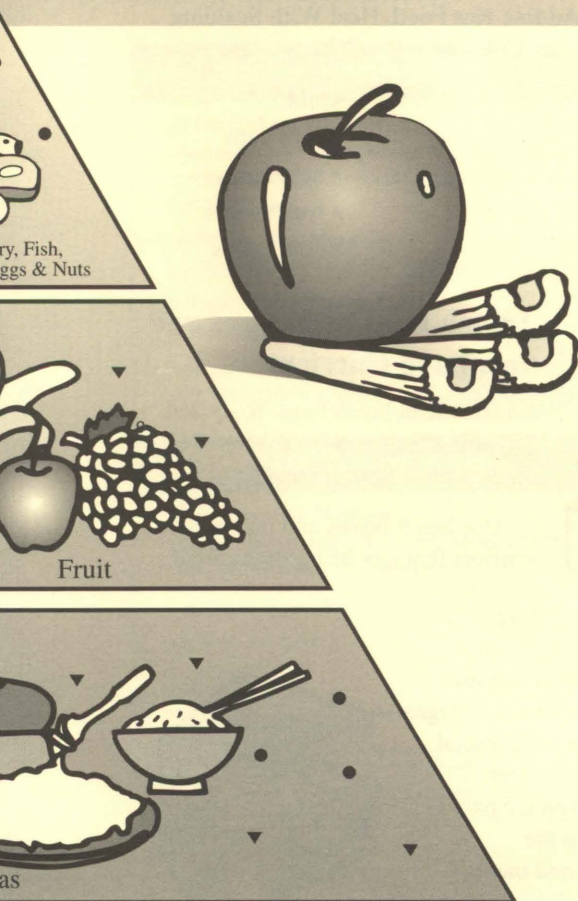
Vegetables

Fruit

Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dried
Beans, Eggs & Nuts

Milk, Yogurt & Cheese





Fats & Sweets

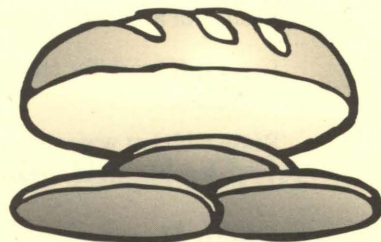


Sandwiches







The same sandwich every day in a carried lunch can be a bore. Add chopped fresh fruit (pineapple, apple, raisins, banana) or vegetables (tomato, cucumber, bean sprouts) to sandwich fillings for crunchy, tasty contrasts. Try a "Veggie" sandwich.

Peanut butter spread mixed with

-  chopped crisp bacon, raw apple
-  deviled ham, chopped dill pickles
-  chopped orange and granola
-  chopped peanuts, grated carrots and raisins





Cheese (grated or ground) spread mixed with







-  dried beef and chili sauce
-  deviled ham and sweet pickles
-  ripe olives and chopped green pepper
-  nuts, pineapple and celery
-  small cheese balls rolled in nuts
-  celery stuffed with cheese spread or peanut butter mixture






Beans - plain or mashed

-  kidney beans, vinegar, chili powder, ground cumin, chopped onion
-  cooked diced beans with onion, basil, oregano, and tomato sauce

Meat Spreads

-  ground ham, chopped orange or pineapple, mustard
-  ground tongue, horseradish
-  chopped chicken or poultry, apple, celery; or with nuts and green grapes
-  chopped ham and cheese with dill pickle
-  deviled ham, lemon juice, grated apple
-  meat filling wrapped in cheese slice

Fish Salad

-  shrimp, chopped green pepper, celery, raisins, curry powder
-  salmon, cucumber and onion
-  tuna with chopped apple and lemon juice; chopped celery and nuts; chopped pineapple and celery

Safe Work Habits

Bacteria can be carried by food, by skin, nose, or throat, by pets, insects and by work surfaces which come in contact with any of these.

1. Clean and Sanitize Kitchen and Equipment

Wash with hot soapy water.

Use a stiff brush for crevices around handles and blades.

Rinse with hot water or sanitize with a bleach solution (1 tsp. bleach per quart of water.)

2. Clean Hands

Wash with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.

Don't handle food if your hands have cuts or sores or if you have a cold.

Always wash your hands after handling raw foods, and after using the restroom.

3. Clean Food

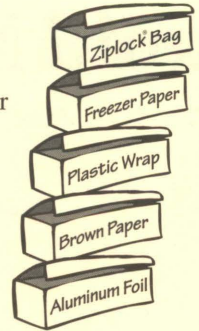
Wash fruit and vegetables under cold running water to remove soil, bacteria, and possible pesticide residues. Do not use spoiled food.



Wrappings

Choose wrappings that are moisture- and vapor-proof for

- sandwiches
- chops
- chicken pieces
- fruit
- vegetables



To avoid soggy bread, carry lettuce and tomato separately to add to the sandwich.

Plastic Containers

Plastic containers save money because they can be used over and over again. They should have a tight seal, be durable, and easily cleaned



Uses

- salads
- fruit cup
- cereal mixtures
- pastries
- sandwiches

Carried Meals

Vacuum Bottles

Thoroughly clean after use. Have soups, stews, and other main dishes boiling hot when poured into the thermos. Some vacuum containers have a coolant in the top. Freeze the top before adding cool food to the thermos.



HINT: Before Adding Hot Food, Heat With Scalding Water. For Cold Food, Chill With Ice Cubes.

Hot

- soups
- stews, chili
- main dishes
- baked beans

Cold

- fruit cups
- beverages
- fruit salads
- cold soups

Lunch Bags and Boxes and Insulated Carriers

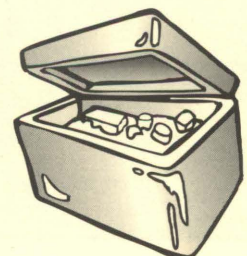
Use clean lunch bags. Recycled shopping bags can be infested from insects or food leakage.

Use lunch boxes and insulated carriers that can be easily cleaned.



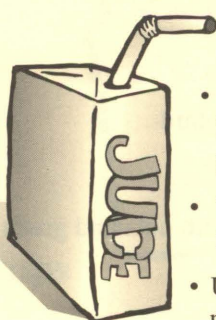
Coolers

Pack foods cooled from the refrigerator. Add frozen beverages (juices or water) or commercial products that can be frozen. Crushed ice or frozen ice packs can be used to keep the temperature of carried meals below 41°F.



Packing the Meal

- Use leftovers for spreads. Save time by making spreads and sandwiches at time of use, instead of first freezing leftovers.
- Line up slices so they are the same size (day old bread is easier to work with).



- Pack lunches right from the refrigerator.
- Make fillings and sandwiches the night before so the sandwich is chilled when packed in the carried lunch.
- To keep food cool, add a can or jar of frozen water or juice.
- Use butter or margarine instead of mayonnaise if you freeze sandwiches.

- If you carry frozen meals/dinners, pack the meal to keep it frozen until heating time.

Let the Family Decide Surprises

- planning poems or special themes
- making spreads and wrapping sandwiches
- practicing safety and sanitation