As always, follow good hygiene and food safety practices when preparing food:
- Purchase food from reputable sources
- Cook food thoroughly by checking food temperatures with a calibrated digital thermometer
- Measure at the thickest spot and stir liquid-based foods before checking temperature
- Cool perishable foods quickly from 135ºF to 41ºF by dividing food in smaller portions or shallow containers, placing in an ice water bath or stirring food frequently to cool faster
- Maintain safe holding temperatures
- Use good personal hygiene and wash hands frequently
- Clean and sanitize dishes, tools and surfaces

**Handling Allergens**
- Ask if people have known food allergies before packaging food for individuals and keep allergy-safe separate from other meals
- Have different serving utensils for each dish when portioning food to prevent cross-contact
- Label foods containing major allergens: milk, eggs, tree nuts, shellfish/mollusks, fish, soy, peanuts and wheat

**Assign volunteers preparing, packing or distributing food in groups so they always work together to minimize the spread of COVID-19.**

**Preparing Food for Others**

**Packing Food**
- No clusters of illnesses linked to food consumption or handling have been observed anywhere in the world, but epidemiologists and food safety professionals continue to look for links
  - However, to further minimize risk, when repackaging previously cooked food made from a third party such as pizza slices, wash your hands and/or use hand sanitizer after handling the packaging
- Mark food with the time and date it was prepared
- Properly cover the food to prevent cross-contamination

**Holding Food**
- Harmful bacteria grow fastest between 41ºF and 135ºF so it is important to minimize the time food is left in this range
- Hold hot foods at 135ºF or above by using chafing dishes, warming trays or slow cookers
- Hold cold foods at 41ºF or lower by placing food containers in larger containers filled with ice
- Perishable foods, such as those containing animal products, cooked vegetables and grains can remain without temperature control for up to 4 hours if:
  - Organization has an established procedure for using Time as a Public Health Control
  - Foods must be marked with start time
  - Starting temperature must be at or above 135ºF or at or below 41ºF
  - They will not be reheated or re-cooled
- All perishable food should be tossed or composted after four hours at room temperature

**Stay informed:**
go.nccsu.edu/covid-19
Updated August 4, 2020