



Mealtime Memo

SAFE MEALS FOR FIELD TRIPS



July is National Picnic Month, a great time to take children outside to explore parks, nature, or community events. But just like any mealtime at your program, food safety is important when you are away from the center. Your field trip meals can be safe and enjoyable with planning, communication, and smart packing. This *Mealtime Memo* shows how to pack, store, and serve meals safely for field trips while meeting the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) requirements.

Before You Go: Planning & Packing

Prepare your supplies ahead of time:

Keep cold foods cold using insulated bags, coolers, and ice packs. Clean and sanitize everything before packing.

- Use a refrigerator thermometer in the cooler to check that food stays at 41 °F or below.
- Use sealed, sanitized containers for all food.
- Prepare meals as close to the time you plan to leave as possible, keeping perishables in the fridge until packing.
- Prevent cross-contact by storing foods with allergens away from allergen-free foods.

Don't forget:

- Special dietary needs
- Napkins, utensils, and plates
- Plans for trash and recycling

Field Trip-Friendly Foods

When planning meals or snacks for a field trip, choose foods that travel well, are easy to serve, and meet CACFP requirements.

Meats/Meat Alternates

- Nuts or seeds, trail mix
- Nut or seed butter sandwiches
- String cheese
- Shelf-stable items like beef jerky or summer sausage (with CN label or Product Formulation Statement)





Fruits & Veggies

- Apples, pears, bananas, oranges, grapes, blueberries
- Applesauce or fruit cups, dried fruits (raisins, cranberries)
- Carrot sticks, celery, cherry tomatoes, snap peas

Grains

- Crackers, popcorn, pretzels, rice cakes, pita bread, bagels, muffins

Beverages

- Milk cartons (for meals)
- 100% juice boxes or water bottles (for snacks)



At Your Destination: Serving Safely



- Eat soon after arriving to reduce food safety risks.
- Check temperatures before serving:
 - **Milk:** Insert a sanitized thermometer at least 2 inches deep into the carton.
 - **Packaged foods:** Place a thermometer between two packages.
- Have children and staff wash their hands before eating or serving. If there is no sink, set up a **portable handwashing station:**
 - 5-gallon water jug with spout
 - Soap
 - Paper towels
 - Bucket for used towels
- If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol. Rub your hands together for about 20 seconds until dry.

Take the ICN [Temporary Handwashing Station](#) poster on your field trip as a visual reminder.

Food Safety on the Go

- Keep perishable foods cold (at or below 41 °F).
- Throw away food if it remains in the temperature danger zone (41 °F–135 °F) for more than 4 hours. When in doubt, throw it out!
 - Record the time and temperature of food at both packing and service.
- Check with your local health department for any additional regulations.

Tip: Plan trips in the cooler part of the day, like the morning.

Learn more from ICN's [Transporting Foods Fact Sheet](#).

CACFP Field Trip Meal Requirements

You can still claim meals served on field trips if you:

- Serve all required meal components, including fluid milk at meals,
- Take an accurate meal count at the time of service, and
- Train staff on CACFP rules and safe food handling.

With careful planning and safe food handling, your field trip can be a healthy, fun, and safe adventure for all children in your care.



References

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