

Shared Meals in Trying Times

Considerations During the Coronavirus Pandemic



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Before making any plans for shared meals during the coronavirus pandemic, check recommendations and restrictions from trusted sources like the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Check your state and local government restrictions since they vary by location. Remember that restrictions may change often, sometimes daily, so use the most up to date information available.

The risk of COVID-19 spreading at events and gatherings increases as follows:

Lowest risk: Virtual-only activities, events, and gatherings. Food service limited to drive-through, delivery, take-out, and curbside pick up.

More risk: Smaller outdoor and in-person gatherings in which individuals from different households remain spaced at least 6 feet apart, wear cloth face coverings, do not share objects, and come from the same local area. On-site dining limited to outdoor seating. Seating capacity reduced to allow tables to be spaced at least 6 feet apart.

Higher risk: Medium-sized in-person gatherings that are adapted to allow individuals to remain spaced at least 6 feet apart and with attendees coming from outside the local area. On-site dining with both indoor and outdoor seating. Tables spaced at least 6 feet apart.

Highest risk: Large in-person gatherings where it is difficult for individuals to remain spaced at least 6 feet apart and attendees travel from outside the local area. On-site dining with both indoor and outdoor seating. Seating capacity not reduced and tables not spaced at least 6 feet apart.

CDC Considerations for Events and Gatherings, 7-7-2020

CDC Considerations for Restaurants and Bars, 7-17-2020

IF food service is permitted at an event, reduce risk as much as possible.

Ensure adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors. Supplies include soap, hand sanitizer (on every table if possible), paper towels, tissues, and no-touch trash cans.

Post signs in highly visible locations that promote protective measures and describe how to stop the spread of germs. Free printable signs are available from state Cooperative Extension sources, state government sources, and the CDC.

Use disposable food service items including utensils and dishes. Disposable items may still be environmentally sustainable, so look for items that come from sustainable sources (i.e. paper or recyclable plastics.)

Avoid offering any self-serve food or drink options, such as buffets or salad bars. Consider individually plated meals, pre-packaged boxes or bags, or grab-and-go options. Be sure that foods are held at safe temperatures. Hold activities in areas separate from dining.

Increase healthy food offerings whenever possible. Follow the www.choosemyplate.gov plan when selecting menu items for your event meal.

- * Follow the MyPlate plan: Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.
- * Color is key: Consider color and texture of fruits and vegetables .
- * Consider fruits and vegetables that hold up well for transport and delivery.
- * Include whole grains and lean proteins when possible.
- * Consider nuts and seeds as a protein if appropriate.
- * Select smaller portions of desserts or serve fruit as a dessert option.
- * Include dairy when possible with low-fat cheeses and individual servings of yogurt.

A helpful planning tool may be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community/COVID19-events-gatherings-readiness-and-planning-tool.pdf>

