Food safety comes first

A few things to keep in mind during your summer barbecue to avoid getting sick

By KATE GENELLIE

The Herald-Palladium

ST. JOSEPH - Sun, sand and cookouts - is there anything more essential to a Southwest Michigan summer?

But when your friends and family come over for a barbecue, some uninvited guests could show up, too. They're microscopic, and, if you let them stick around, they'll wear out their welcome

Their names are salmonella, listeria monocytogenes, E. coli and noroviruses - among others.

One in six Americans get sick from them each year, and food poisoning sends more than 100,000 Americans to the hospital, according to

foodsafety.gov.
Foodborne illnesses are contracted when food isn't prepared properly and can cause nausea, cramps, diarrhea and vomiting.



Chris Woodruff, who runs the hospitality program and teaches food safety courses at Lake Michigan College, said the same rules he goes over with his students will help home cooks keep their food safe as well.

Woodruff said home cooks don't have to know much about the bacteria and viruses.

"The great thing is, you don't have to know them or how to spell them," Woodruff said. "I just tell (my students), 'Know how to prevent them.

Woodruff teaches classes of about 60 hospitality and culinary students per tional program developed by the National Restaurant Association. Michi- preparation could wrong, starting before ing food from suspect suppliers, Wood- prevent foodborne illness," Woodruff employ at least one food manager ac- them to consider the suppliers. Are they credited by the ServSafe program.

Woodruff's students start with consid-tices? ering the flow of food, he said. He wants his students to think of all the ways food could make a bad decision" by purchas-



year. He also certifies between 150 and When attending an outdoor barbecue this summer, be conscicus of how long food has been exposed to the elements to avoid foodborne 200 industry workers in ServSafe, a na-illness.

gan requires that most restaurants the food gets to their kitchen. He wants ruff said.

The most important factors to contrustworthy? Do they use safe food prac- sider, he said, are food temperatures, he said. A home cook may take a plate

Cross contamination is another issue. cross contamination and hand hygiene. of raw hamburgers outside to the grill

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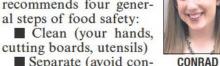
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and then put the grilled hamburgers on that same plate, still covered in raw hamburger juice.

Food safety steps

Gillian Conrad, the communications and administrative services man- GILLIAN CONRAD

ager for the Berrien County Health Department, said the U.S. Department of Agriculture recommends four general steps of food safety:



Separate (avoid contact between certain

perature using a food thermometer)

Chill (raw food should be properly stored, and cooked leftovers should be spaces, employees washing their sea and vomiting. People with noroviture, there's about a two-hour window cooled and then refrigerated)

Extensive information on food safe- temperature. ty tips, broken down by type of food gov.

I think everyone could wash their hands a little bit more. That's my number one

thing.

Berrien County Health Department

restaurant inspections in Berrien Conrad said. "It's nasty." County. Michigan mandates twice

mental health department, said she said. Cook (heat foods to proper tem- looks for the same issues during her watch out for: clean preparation flammation, resulting in diarrhea, nau-

For events like barbecues and out- ish," Conrad said. as well as by events and seasons, can door potlucks. Clement recommends be found online at www.foodsafety, being watchful of how long certain ing foodborne illness outbreaks in making the jobs of everyone at the dishes have been sitting out.

"A food like potato salad is what I call potentially hazardous - it's animal, or dairy, based," Clement said, adding it shouldn't be left outside longer than two hours.

Foodborne illness

be her biggest concern, even more so faces as well, Conrad said. than insects.

The health department conducts all ing a bug than with foodborne illness," serving utensils, then everyone down

Norovirus, a highly contagious virus yearly visits for all year-round restau- and the leading cause of foodborne ill- hands a little bit more," Conrad said. rants, as well as seasonal visits for fes- ness in the U.S. according to the Centivals and food trucks - so summer ters for Disease Control and Preven- ent agreed. weekends are very busy at the BCHD. tion, is often what people are talking Deb Clement, a food sanitarian and about when they say they have a stom- concern in the summer is power outagfoods, such as raw meat and vegeta- team leader of the BCHD environ- ach flu or a "24-hour bug," Conrad es. If the power goes out in your home,

"It can be pretty swift, but it's hell-

places such as cruise ships, because it BCHD a little easier.

Conrad said foodborne illness would can contaminate not just food, but sur-

If a person with norovirus attends a "I would be less concerned with eat- potluck or luncheon and touches the the line could contract the virus.

"I think everyone could wash their

"That's my number one thing," Clem-

Conrad said another food-related food will stay cold in your refrigerator According to the CDC, norovirus for a while as long as you keep the door inspections that home cooks should can cause stomach and intestine in- closed. But once the air temperature inside the fridge rises to room temperahands and food stored at the proper rus usually recover in one to three days. before the food needs to be thrown out.

> Clement said many people are becoming better informed about food Norovirus is usually the culprit dur- safety, improving their own health and

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