



Ontario Home Economics Association

Ask a Professional Home Economist

For Immediate Release

Picnic-Perfect Potato Salad ~ Like Mother Used To Make

by Diane O'Shea, P.H.Ec.

What would summer be without potato salad? The staple food of picnics sends images of tender new potatoes, green onions, pickles, hard-cooked eggs, dill and parsley, mayo, yogurt and sour cream – the list continues but always the criteria, “just like mother use to make!” Does that mean neatly diced potatoes, skins on or off, red ones at that, or a smoothly-mashed creamy mixture? Research indicates the availability of an extensive variety of family favourites. But with the classic seasonal delight comes the potential for food-borne illness.

New potatoes and other vegetables used in potato salad, such as celery, green or red onion, radishes, on their own are considered “lower risk” in terms of food-borne illness – as long as they have been properly handled. Add dairy-case products such as yogurt, sour cream or eggs in mayonnaise dressings, and the potential for supporting the growth of bacteria or other germs becomes “high risk”. The production and serving of a potato salad is an important time to practice the four simple elements of food safety:

CLEAN

Wash hands, surfaces and equipment well and often. Scrub potatoes and other vegetables thoroughly. Be sure food and water both come from safe and reliable sources.

SEPARATE

Cross-contamination occurs when bacteria or other pathogens spread from one food to another. It may happen when cooked or ready-to-eat foods come into contact with raw meat or uncooked foods, dirty hands or equipment. To avoid cross-contamination, cover potato salad tightly in the refrigerator. Use fresh eggs that have been stored in the main section of the refrigerator in their own carton, and always discard eggs that are found cracked.

COOK

Cook foods at recommended temperatures for the proper time. Generally, keep hot foods hot at 60°C (140° F) or hotter until served. Prepare hard-cooked eggs safely and as recommended by the Egg Farmers of Ontario, <http://www.getcracking.ca/>

CHILL

Cold temperatures slow down the growth of bacteria. Be sure to refrigerate within 2 hours of preparation. Avoid over-packing a refrigerator. Cool air must be able to circulate to keep food safe. Transferring hot food to small, shallow containers before refrigerating allows for quicker chilling. In the case of potato

salad, refrigerate as soon as the potatoes have cooled. Refrigerate the hard-cooked eggs as well. Setting the bowl of potato salad in ice at a picnic to keep it at 4° C (40°F) or colder is suggested. Always cover and refrigerate leftovers promptly.

POTATO SALAD LIKE MOTHER USED TO MAKE

Dressing

4 tbsp all purpose flour	60 mL	1 cup water	250 mL
1 tbsp dry mustard	15 mL	1 cup white vinegar	250 mL
1 ¾ cups white sugar	400 mL	2 eggs, lightly beaten	2
¼ tsp salt	1 mL		
Dash each of black pepper, chili powder and celery salt			

Combine flour, mustard, sugar, salt and seasonings. Whisk in water, vinegar and eggs. Cook over low heat on range top or 50% power in the microwave oven, stirring often. Cook until thick. Transfer to shallow container and refrigerate. Makes about 2 cups or 500 mL.

Salad

5 - 6 cups boiled potatoes, cubed	1.25L – 1.5L	½ cup chopped green onion	125 mL
½ cup finely sliced celery	125 mL	¼ cup chopped sweet pickle	60 mL
¼ cup chopped olives	60 mL	3 - 4 chopped hard-cooked eggs	3 - 4

Toss all of the above ingredients together. Add enough salad dressing to moisten nicely. Serve chilled. Serves 6.

-30-

Diane O’Shea is a London-based Professional Home Economist, a partner in a family farm-market operation near Granton, Ontario and Head of the Family Studies Department at Medway High School. She understands the need for farm-to-fork collaboration to make food safety everyone’s business.

The Ontario Home Economics Association, a self-regulated body of Professional Home Economists, promotes high professional standards among its members so that they may assist families and individuals to achieve and maintain a desirable quality of life.

OHEA supports the work of the Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education, which can be accessed at www.canfightbac.org.

For further information, please contact:

Ontario Home Economics Association
 14 Totten Place, Woodstock, ON N4S 8G7
 Tel/Fax: 519-290-1843
 E-mail: nancyohea@rogers.com
 Website: www.ohea.on.ca