

Keeping Your Food Safe



Preparing and Serving Vegetables and Fruit:

Initiatives that involve preparing and/or serving vegetables and fruit must have the necessary items required to ensure vegetables and fruit are served safely:

- A sink available with potable water to wash all fruits and veggies prior to preparing/serving.
- A hand wash basin equipped with warm water, soap in a dispenser and paper towels so everyone can wash their hands prior to eating.
- A food preparation area that is clean and has smooth cleanable surfaces, and a two compartment sink or dishwasher for cleaning and sanitizing utensils used in preparation and serving.
- If vegetables and fruit are to be cut up or prepared ahead of time, they must be covered, refrigerated and have adequate refrigeration space.

Food Safety Considerations For Gardening Initiatives:

If your organization makes an informed decision to bring gardening into your programming, here are some food safety considerations to address to ensure the food your garden produces is safe.

- Ensure the soil located at the garden site is clean soil (not contaminated with building material, and other buried hazards).
- If you choose to use manure as fertilizer ensure that the manure is well composted as fresh manure has high levels of pathogenic bacteria that can transfer onto food products or children's hands and cause illness. The following resource may be useful: <https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/manure/documents/nm1478.pdf>
- Use a safe source of water to water the garden. Avoid use of surface water from ponds and creeks which may contain various contaminants and parasites. If you choose to use a rain barrel, ensure it has a screen on top to prevent conditions that are favourable for mosquitoes. Water in rain barrels is exposed to run off from the roof which may contain bird droppings and chemical compounds found in roofing tiles <https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/drinking/private/rainwater-collection.html>
- Encourage children to wash their hands after working in the garden and before eating.
- If your program progresses to include preparation of produce that the students grow in the garden, ensure you have proper facilities at your organization to wash produce and once again ensure children wash their hands prior to any food preparation. The health unit has food safety resources available. <http://www.healthunit.org/foodsafety/foodsafetyhome.html>
- If your program progresses to include preservation or processing of produce from the garden, ensure validated recipes are used and followed exactly (doubling or increasing the recipe can create food safety hazards). Only recipes that have high acidity levels should be used to prevent the risk of Botulism (a risk from improperly canned foods). Jams, Jellies and pickled products are the safest to make in the school environment.

Processing in a boiling water bath is an essential step.