



# Food Safety Guide for Volunteers

## SANDWICH PREPARATION, STORAGE, & DELIVERY

### Know the Drill, Always Chill



#### TWO-HOUR RULE — KEEP IT COLD, KEEP IT SAFE

- Deli meat needs to stay cold — at or below **40°F (refrigerator temperature)** — to remain safe to eat.
- Bacteria can begin to grow after a total of **two hours at room temperature**, and that time adds up across every step: shopping, transport, and sandwich preparation.
- To keep sandwiches safe, **get deli meat back into the refrigerator as quickly as possible** at each step, and avoid leaving it out longer than necessary.



To ensure food safety, deli meat must not be exposed to temperatures exceeding 80°F (27°C).

### Before You Make Sandwiches:

- **Take a cooler and ice packs to the store for meat and cheese transport.** Go directly home. Refrigerate meat and cheese immediately.
- **Purchase the same quality ingredients that you would feed your own family!**
  - However, **do not use meats sliced at the deli counter** - use pre-packaged meat only
- **Check expiration dates** before you buy meat, cheese, and bread.
  - The “*use by*” date must be at least **7 days** before you drop off sandwiches at a host home.
  - Always buy products with the *latest expiration dates*.

- Keep **opened** meat packages for **no longer than 3 days** in the refrigerator. Avoid overpacking your refrigerator.
- Even if packages are sealed and **unopened** and the expiration period has not expired, do not use them after **2 weeks** from the purchase date.

## Making Sandwiches

- TSP collects sandwiches from host homes on Wednesday for delivery to recipient organizations on Thursday morning.
  - Therefore, sandwiches must be **made on Wednesday**, or Tuesday evening if necessary.
  - Sandwiches should **never be made before Tuesday evening**.
- Sandwiches need to be delivered to a host home **within 24 hours of being made**.
  - It's best to drop them off as soon as possible after preparation.
- **Clean and cover all counters** for sandwich preparation.
- **Do not leave open containers of peanut butter** or other nut/shellfish products near deli ingredients. Use separate knives for the jelly and the peanut butter.
- Tie hair longer than chin-length in a **ponytail or cover hair**.
- **Wear food-safe gloves**. Wash your hands before you put on your gloves. Change gloves if you touch anything other than food ingredients.
- **Do not** overfill your refrigerator. Allow cold air to circulate around refrigerated foods to keep them properly chilled.
- To prevent bacterial growth, keep meat and cheese refrigerated, taking only **one package** of meat and **one package** of cheese from the refrigerator at a time.
  - Make **one loaf** of sandwiches at a time.
  - **Immediately** return the completed loaf to the refrigerator before starting another loaf.
  - If you are working with others, some people should make sandwiches while others pack sandwiches, take finished loaves to the refrigerator, and get additional meat/cheese from the refrigerator as needed.

## Transporting Sandwiches

- **For delivery, use a cooler with ice packs** and fill coolers as much as possible so air does not circulate. Use enough ice packs to keep sandwiches “refrigerator cold” and transport them directly to a nearby host home.
- **You must never put warm sandwiches into a cooler!**
  - **Coolers and ice packs do not make sandwiches cold.**

- If you need more storage space for sandwiches, **use your freezer.**
- At the host home, make sure you use the **correct label:** Deli or PB&J.
  - Use only TSP-issued labels.



Be aware that sandwich recipients may be children, elderly, or immunocompromised. Perishable food can make people sick even if it does not look, smell or taste spoiled. If you suspect any food has not been handled as outlined above remember... **WHEN IN DOUBT THROW IT OUT!**

## References

[USDA: Safe Handling of Take-Out Foods](#)

[FDA: Are You Storing Food Safely?](#)

## Additional Information

Website: [thesandwichproject.org](https://thesandwichproject.org)

Email: [info@thesandwichproject.org](mailto:info@thesandwichproject.org)