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CAMPFIRE COOKING SAFETY

Clover Safe notes are intended primarily for 4-H volunteers and members nine years and older.



Cooking over a campfire can be a challenging and rewarding experience that can also result in a good tasting meal. However, it must be conducted with care to assure that participants do not get burned or the campfire does not inadvertently become uncontrolled and result in an unintentional wildfire.

This Clover Safe note provides information about how to cook safely while using a campfire.

Campfire Cooking Safety Precautions

- Prior to starting a campfire, learn whether any outdoor burning restrictions are in place. Always follow any outdoor burning restrictions and government regulations.
- A first aid kit, emergency telephone numbers (911), directions to the closest emergency care facility, and cell or land-line phone should be readily available before the campfire is started.
- Water should be available at all times to extinguish the fire quickly if necessary.
- Never locate a campfire under hanging branches or in areas of heavy brush or tall grasses.
- Use a fire ring that is either built from stones or composed of a metal ring.
- Do not start a fire with a flammable fuel. Use paper scraps or small kindling to start a campfire. Never throw away a burned match until the match head is cold to the touch.
- Do not start a campfire during a thunderstorm or during periods of high winds.
- Never leave a campfire unattended. A responsible adult must be present at all times that a campfire is burning.
- Wear clothing that is snug and buttoned or zipped. Loose clothing can get close to flames and catch fire.
- Always begin food preparation activities by washing your hands with soap and water.
- Use a metal grate to hold pots or frying pans above the campfire. Steel tripods may also be used to hold pots above campfires. Use hot pad holders to pick up hot pots and pans.
- Use long handle tongs, spatulas, and forks to turn or move food on grills.
- Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold.
- Follow food recipes precisely and completely. Do not take food preparation short cuts.
- See the University of California Cooperative Extension brochure entitled “Make It Safe – Keep It Safe, FIGHT BAC! Keep Food Safe From Bacteria” for additional information about food preparation and handling safety. This brochure is available at county Cooperative Extension offices and online at: <http://ucanr.org/foodsafety>.
- Put the campfire out by drowning it with water. Stir the water and ashes until the ashes are cold to the touch.
- At a later time, double check the campfire ashes to assure that the fire has remained out.