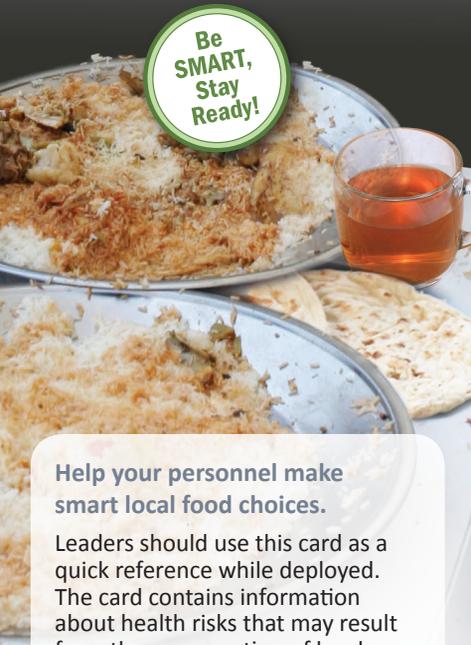


Leader's Tips for Eating Local

Don't let food bring your unit down!



Be
SMART,
Stay
Ready!



Help your personnel make smart local food choices.

Leaders should use this card as a quick reference while deployed. The card contains information about health risks that may result from the consumption of local foods and information about safer food choices. Local foods are those eaten on the economy and/or from sources not approved by U.S. military preventive medicine and veterinary personnel. They are found off-Forward Operating Base (FOB) and also on-FOB in host country owned and operated food establishments. Do not assume local foods eaten on-FOB are from approved sources.

Leader's Responsibility

Commanders are responsible for implementing an effective Force Health Protection (FHP) program, and Service members and Civilian personnel are responsible for complying with prevention measures.

Prevention of illness is key to ensuring military operational readiness. Gastrointestinal illness, such as diarrhea, commonly afflicts deployed U.S. military personnel and can adversely affect operational readiness.

Increased Exposure to Local Foods

Recent changes in strategy and the importance placed on counterinsurgency (COIN) operations in a number of countries around the world have increased the amount of time certain personnel spend off base, immersed in the lives of local populations^{1,2}. Part of this cultural immersion involves participating in local customs and dining with local populations, which increases exposure to local foods.

Being invited to dine with locals is generally considered an honor and is a powerful way to build trust. Cultural sensitivity and tact are critical. Refusing food can offend partners. Certain foods, however, carry a higher risk of foodborne illness than others and should be avoided.

What Risks Are Involved With Eating Local?

At times, U.S. forces may choose or be required to eat local foods with community leaders and residents. Eating local allows for enhanced understanding and exchange of customs between U.S. forces and local communities. The practice can create significant bonding and improve working relationships, trust and morale.

Although eating local may be good for relationship building, it does carry some risk. Those not accustomed to eating local foods may be more susceptible to foodborne illnesses. Foodborne illness may be relatively short in duration (hours or days) or severe, long-term or chronic, and even life-threatening. Potential for lost duty days, decreased performance, or even mission failure exists.

In addition, when eating local food, Service members should also be aware of the potential for intentional food contamination and poisoning risks by enemy forces. Maintaining situational awareness is critical.

When to Seek Medical Attention

If Service members experience any of the following symptoms, have them seek immediate medical attention. Common symptoms of foodborne illness include:

- » Nausea
- » Vomiting
- » Diarrhea
- » Fever

How to Decrease the Risk

Providing your personnel with the information they need to make educated choices regarding the types of local food they eat can help to reduce the risk of foodborne illness and its impact on your unit. The chart below identifies common local foods based on the level of risk they pose for foodborne illness. This information does not replace command guidance. Personnel should always seek command guidance before eating from unapproved sources.

Lower Risk Foods	Higher Risk Foods
<i>Eat Lower Risk Foods with Caution</i>	<i>Avoid Higher Risk Foods</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Breads» Fully cooked vegetables, beans and rice that are kept and served hot» Boiled or well done meats (lamb, beef, poultry and fish) that are eaten within 2 hours after cooking» Hard-skin fruits and vegetables that you peel yourself (bananas, oranges, limes)» Hot tea» Bottled water or canned carbonated drinks that you open yourself  	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Milk and other dairy products (cheese, ice cream and butter)» Partially cooked or raw meats or fish» Raw, leafy vegetables» Leftovers, take-home, or doggie bags» Opened/unsealed beverage containers» Ice, iced drinks, frozen desserts and juices» Locally canned or packaged products  

Use Your Resources:

- » Check the USAPHC HIP eCatalog to download and order food safety and other products for your Service members: <https://usaphcapps.amedd.army.mil/HIOShoppingCart/>.
- » For more information on food safety, contact the U.S. Army Institute of Public Health Water Supply Management Program: <http://phc.amedd.army.mil/organization/institute/dehe/Pages/wsmpp.aspx> or the AIPH Food Protection Program: <http://phc.amedd.army.mil/ORGANIZATION/INSTITUTE/DVET/Pages/FoodProtection.aspx>.

References: ¹Cohen E, Crane C, Horvath J, & Nagle J. March-April 2006. Principles, imperatives, and paradoxes of counterinsurgency. *Military Review*, 49-53. ²Lamb CJ & Cinnamon M. 2010. Unified effort key to special operations and irregular warfare in Afghanistan. *Joint Force Quarterly*, 56(1), 40-53.