Carry chilled dessert cups in one supported tray

Plan a supported tray for chilled dessert cups inside a cooler. The worksheet offers eight example paper footprints and a planner; measure your own cups and lids to make matching templates.

What you need

- Chilled dessert cups with lids
- A rigid, flat tray that fits inside your cooler
- Nonslip liner or a folded towel
- A cooler with ice or frozen gel packs
- Ruler, scissors and the printed footprint sheet

1. Test the layout with paper footprints

Print the example sheet at 100% and check the 1-inch square. Each example has a 2.2-inch outer square and a 1.6-inch inner square. Measure your own cups and lids first; if they differ, cut paper to match your measurements. Lay the matching footprints in your tray.

2. Leave lifting room

Arrange the footprints so you can lift one cup out without knocking the next. Write how many fit and the tray's inside size on the planner. Do not stack cups unless they are made to stack.

3. Pack the tray in the cooler

Put the liner in the tray, then the closed, chilled cups, checking that every lid is seated. FDA advises carrying cold food in a cooler with ice or frozen gel packs at 40 °F or below. Set the tray flat in the cooler with gel packs around it, not on the lids.

4. Serve on ice

Keep the cooler closed and the cups in it until serving time. FDA says desserts in individual serving dishes can be set directly on ice or in a shallow container in a deeper pan of ice; once served, they should not sit out more than 2 hours, or 1 hour if the outdoor temperature is above 90 °F.

Important

These are example footprints, not a fit guarantee. Measure your own cups and lids; dome lids may be wider than the cup.

Food-safety timing: Count all time the cups spend out of refrigeration or effective cooling toward the limit; chilling them again does not reset the clock.

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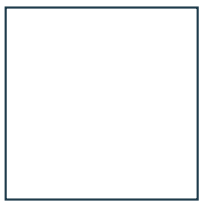
Print at 100% on plain paper; do not use 'fit to page'.

Example dimensions: outer square 2.2 in; inner square 1.6 in. Measure your cups and lids first.





Check: this square should measure 1 inch on each side.

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Tray and cooler planner

Your cup top (measured): _____

Your lid (measured): _____

Tray inside length x width: _____

Cups that fit with lifting room: _____

Cooler inside length x width x depth: _____

Tray lies flat in the cooler? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Cups in this tray

Position	Dessert / guest	Lid seated	Out at	Back on ice or discard by
1		☐		
2		☐		
3		☐		
4		☐		
5		☐		
6		☐		
7		☐		
8		☐		

Before you leave

- ☐ Cups chilled before packing.
- ☐ Liner in the tray; cups upright and not stacked.
- ☐ Ice or frozen gel packs around the tray, not on the lids.

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Tips and disclosures

- A tray keeps cups upright; only the cooler and its ice keep them cold.
- Drain melted ice from the serving pan and add fresh ice as it melts (FDA).
- Use suitable cups you already own and follow their food-contact and temperature directions.

Notice: AI concept illustration

AI concept illustration: the image is an original AI editorial illustration of dessert cups carried in a tray, not a photograph of a tested result or of the linked product. It does not establish colour, capacity, fit, temperature or results; check the retailer listing and the maker's directions.

Sources

Main source: FDA: Handling Food Safely While Eating Outdoors

FDA: Handling Food Safely While Eating Outdoors
https://www.fda.gov/food/buy-store-serve-safe-food/eating-outdoors-handling-food-safely

Source note: FDA supports carrying cold food in a cooler with ice or frozen gel packs at 40 °F or below, keeping it in the cooler until serving, serving individual desserts on ice and the 2-hour (1-hour above 90 °F) limit. The example sizes and tray layout are FigureNook planning aids; measure your own cups.