

# Holiday Food Safety Tips

The holidays are fast approaching, and with them comes the anticipation of eating our favorite holiday foods. To safely prepare and serve your holiday foods, follow these tips:

- ❖ Most egg nog recipes are made and served using raw eggs. As consumers we know that whole raw eggs carry Salmonella. To reduce the risk of getting sick from raw eggs, prepare your egg nog recipes with a pasteurized egg product instead.



- ❖ When preparing your holiday turkey, never thaw it at room temperature. Thaw it under refrigeration approximately 24 hours per 5 pounds). Stuff the turkey loosely on the day you will be cooking it. Cook the turkey to an internal temperature of 180° F in the thigh. The center of the stuffing should reach 165° F. Juices should be clear.



Refrigerate all leftovers within 2 hours of cooking. Reheat leftovers to a temperature of 165 ° F before serving.

- ❖ Many of us give and receive mail order foods as holiday gifts. Some types of hard salami and dried meats do not require refrigeration. However most other meat, poultry and cheese products do require refrigeration and will state so on the label. These items must arrive as cold as if refrigerated in order to be safe. Before ordering such items, ask questions about how and when the product will be shipped and whether a cold pack will be included to assure the product will be received cold. If you receive a package containing items requiring refrigeration, check the item upon receipt to see if it is cold. If it is not, call the mail order company to arrange for a replacement that will arrive cold or request a refund.

## Food Safety a Must for Holiday Buffets

A popular way to celebrate the holidays or other special occasions is to invite family and friends to a buffet dinner. However, this type of service where foods are left out for long periods of time, leaves the door open for not only the invited guests... but also uninvited guests such as bacteria that cause foodborne illness.

Careful attention to the way food is served will help ensure that guests do not become victims of food poisoning.

- ❖ If you are planning a holiday buffet, the key to food safety is to keep perishable foods at a safe temperature. Bacteria tend to grow when food is maintained at a temperature between 40° to 140° F for more than 2-3 hours. A thermometer that registers in that zone is a wise investment.



- ❖ Always wash your hands before and after handling food.
- ❖ If you are cooking foods ahead of time for your buffet, be sure to cook them thoroughly to safe temperatures. Cook fresh roast beef to at least 145° F for medium rare and 160° F for medium doneness. Bake whole poultry to 180° F and poultry breasts to 170° F. Ground poultry should be cooked to 165° F. All other meat, fish and ground red meats should be cooked to 160° F.
- ❖ To keep foods hot (above 140° F) use warming plates, chaffing dishes or appliances such as slow cookers or electric frying pans on “low” settings. Also, hold hot food in the oven (on low) before transferring it to the buffet table.
- ❖ Keep cold foods cold by placing them on ice on the serving table. Be sure to leave them in the refrigerator until you’re ready to serve them.
- ❖ Serve small quantities of food and plan to replenish containers frequently. Avoid adding fresh food to leftovers that may have been held at an unsafe temperature.
- ❖ If you have catered or take out food on the buffet, handle it safely, too. If foods are delivered or picked up far in advance, make sure you have room in the oven or refrigerator to hold them.
- ❖ When the party’s over, discard any foods that sat for two hours or more on the buffet table. Other leftovers can be refrigerated or frozen in shallow containers.
- ❖ In general most leftovers are safe in the refrigerator four days. All leftovers should be reheated to 165° F.