

Holiday Food Safety Tips

Season's Greetings! It's the holidays! It's time for decking the halls with boughs of holly and roasting chestnuts on an open fire. This season of goodwill and giving thanks is also a festive celebration of food. With so many delightful foods to choose from, it's important to keep your holiday meals safe. Join in the festivities and ensure a safe holiday feasting season for you, your family, and your friends by following these food safety tips.

The Invisible Enemy

You can't see, taste, or smell bacteria, but it can be on food and multiply rapidly in moist, warm conditions. If consumed, harmful bacteria can cause foodborne illness.

BeEgg-stra Cautious!

Around the holidays, people eat a variety of foods, some of which may contain uncooked or lightly-cooked eggs. However, even grade A eggs with clean, uncracked shells can be contaminated with *Salmonella enteritidis* bacteria. That's why it's important to cook eggs thoroughly to kill any bacteria that may be present.



Chocolate macarons, and gingerbread ... how sweet are the aromas of freshly-baked cookies around the holidays. Treat your tummy to these tasty yummys, but avoid licking the spoon or the mixing bowl if the batter contains uncooked eggs. Tasting cookie or cake batter can be tempting, but remember that bacteria could be lurking in those uncooked eggs.



Holiday Buffets and Potlucks

A popular way to celebrate holidays or any party occasion is to invite friends and family to a buffet. However, this type of food service where foods are left out for long periods of time leaves the door open for uninvited guests — bacteria that cause foodborne illness. Festive times for giving and sharing should not include sharing foodborne illness.

Safe Food Handling

Always wash your hands before and after handling food. Keep your kitchen, dishes and utensils clean. Always serve food on clean plates — not those previously holding raw meat and poultry. Otherwise, bacteria which may have been present in raw meat juices can cross contaminate the food to be served.



Cooking Thoroughly

If you are cooking foods ahead of time for your party, be sure to cook foods thoroughly to a safe minimum internal temperature:

- Raw shell eggs, fish, and single pieces of meat like beef, veal, lamb and pork to 145°F.
- All ground meats like sausage and hamburger, as well as foods containing raw eggs to 155°F.
- All poultry such as turkey, chicken, and duck to 165°F.
- All stuffed foods such as stuffed poultry, meat, fish, and pasta 165°F.

Use Shallow Containers

Divide cooked foods into shallow containers to store in the refrigerator or freezer until serving. This encourages rapid, even cooling. Rapidly reheat hot foods to 165°F. Arrange and serve food on several small platters rather than on one large platter. Keep the rest of the food hot in the oven (set at 200 - 250°F) or cold in the refrigerator until serving time. This way foods will be held at a safe temperature for a longer period of time. REPLACE empty platters rather than adding fresh food to a dish that already had food in it. Many people's hands may have been taking food from the dish, which has also been sitting out at room temperature.



The Two-Hour Rule

Foods should not sit at room temperature for more than two hours. Keep track of how long foods have been sitting on the buffet table and discard uneaten food after two hours.

Keep Hot Foods Hot and Cold Foods Cold

Hot foods should be held at 135°F or warmer. On the buffet table you can keep hot foods hot with chafing dishes, slow cookers, and warming trays. Cold foods should be held at 41°F or colder. Keep foods cold by nesting dishes in bowls of ice. Otherwise, use small serving trays and replace them.

Foodborne Bacteria

Bacteria are everywhere but a few types especially like to crash parties. *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Clostridium perfringens* and *Listeria monocytogenes* frequent people's hands and steam tables. Unlike microorganisms that cause food to spoil, harmful or pathogenic bacteria cannot be smelled or tasted.

