

HOLIDAY FOOD SAFETY TIPS

More than 75 million people suffer from food borne illness each year. Here are some tips to prevent your holiday guests and you from becoming one of those statistics.

- Wash your hands for 15-20 seconds with warm water and soap. This can lower your risk of food poisoning by 50%.
- Watch out for raw eggs. They hide in cookie dough, eggnog, and many other holiday foods. Raw eggs contain Salmonella, Salmonella poisoning causes nausea and vomiting within 6 hours. To be safe use pasteurized eggs, or egg substitute. Make sure food is cooked fully before eating.
- TURKEYS...can harbor Campylobacter Jejuni. This can cause serious abdominal pain, even a week after the holiday. Thaw your turkey in the fridge and then cook at 165 degrees. The only safe way to check for a fully cooked turkey is a meat thermometer. Make sure to clean the thermometer between testing to prevent recontamination.
- Don't leave any food out at room temperature for more than 2 hours. Between 40-140 degrees bacteria will continue to grow, doubling their numbers every 20 minutes. Listeria can stick with you up to a month if you pick it up during the holidays.
- Leftovers... Store food carefully to ensure freshness and to keep the bacteria away. Using shallow containers less than 2 inches deep will help cool food quickly to prevent bacterial growth. Turkey will stay good 3-4 days in the fridge, but gravy only 1-2. The same goes for baked goods.
- The popular holiday beef and lamb recipes will frequently call for marinating, sometimes for a few days. In these cases it's critical that the meat be kept chilled in the refrigerator for the entire time. Properly refrigerated, you can safely marinate meat for up to 5 days.
- Use a meat thermometer or instant read thermometer to make sure meats are cooked to the [appropriate degree of doneness](#). Roast beef, grilled steaks and lamb chops should be cooked to a minimum internal temperature of 145°F.
- Note that the minimum cooking temperature for ground meats is higher than that for whole retail cuts like steaks and chops. Ground meats should be cooked to at least 160°F.
- When purchasing a [ham](#), think about whether you want a ready-to-eat ham or a fresh, uncooked ham. Uncooked hams must be cooked to a minimum internal temperature of 160°F.
- Ready-to-eat hams, including spiral-cut hams and fully cooked, unsliced hams, can be served cold or heated up. But if you do decide to reheat a pre-cooked ham, make sure that it reaches an internal temperature of 140°F in no less than two hours.
- That means heating it in a 325°F or hotter oven. Why? Slow cooking at low temperatures can encourage the growth of bacteria, so if your oven isn't warm enough, even a pre-cooked ham could become a breeding ground for dangerous bacteria

Happy Holidays!
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