



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health and Family Services

Jim Doyle, Governor
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FOOD SAFETY TIPS FOR A FESTIVE HOLIDAY SEASON

(MADISON,)—As the holiday season approaches, the Department of Health and Family Services is reminding everyone that careful planning and preparation can greatly reduce the chances of a foodborne illness becoming part of your holiday memories.

“Throughout the holidays, many people enjoy celebrating by entertaining friends and family, and preparing our favorite meals to share,” said Dr. Sheri Johnson, State Health Officer. “To help keep the holiday season safe and enjoyable, it’s best to follow basic food safety guidelines.”

The four basic rules of food safety are:

- **Clean**—Wash hands and food-contact (cutting boards) surfaces often. Bacteria can spread throughout the kitchen and get onto cutting boards, knives, sponges, and counter tops.
- **Separate**— Keep raw meat, poultry and seafood and their juices away from ready-to-eat foods. This prevents bacteria from spreading from one food product to another.
- **Cook**—Cook to proper temperatures. Foods are properly cooked when they are heated for a long enough time and at a high enough temperature to kill the harmful bacteria that cause foodborne illness.
- **Chill**—Refrigerate foods promptly. This keeps most harmful bacteria from growing and multiplying. Refrigerators should be set at 40° Fahrenheit and the freezer at 0° Fahrenheit. Check the accuracy of the settings occasionally with a thermometer.

Turkey

If you choose to buy a frozen turkey, make sure you have enough storage space in your freezer, as well as enough space and time to properly thaw the turkey before cooking. If you buy a fresh turkey, purchase it only 1-2 days before cooking.

Thawing the Turkey

While in its original wrapper, place the frozen turkey in the refrigerator (40 °F). Be sure to place the turkey in a pan to prevent any of the juices from dripping onto other surfaces or foods in the refrigerator. Allow a thawing time of approximately 24 hours per 5 pounds of turkey. After thawing, keep turkey refrigerated for only 1-2 days before cooking.

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If you forget to thaw the turkey or don't have room in the refrigerator for thawing, you can also defrost the turkey by submerging it in cold water and changing the water every 30 minutes. Allow about 30 minutes defrosting time per pound of turkey.

Preparing the Turkey

If you choose to stuff your turkey, stuff loosely. The stuffing should be moist, not dry, since heat destroys bacteria more rapidly in a moist environment. Immediately place stuffed turkey in an oven that has been preheated to 325 °F. A stuffed turkey will take longer to cook than an unstuffed turkey, approximately 20 and 25 minutes per pound. Use a meat thermometer to determine when the turkey is thoroughly cooked. It should read 180 °F when measured in the thigh. When the turkey is removed from the oven, let it stand 20 minutes before you remove the stuffing and carve the turkey.

Storing Leftovers

Cut the turkey into small pieces and refrigerate stuffing and turkey separately in shallow containers. Store leftovers within 2 hours of cooking, and use leftover turkey and stuffing within 3-4 days; gravy within 1-2 days; or freeze these foods for later use.

Considerations for Other Holiday Treats

Some holiday treats may have special guidelines for safe seasonal enjoyment. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration advises people not to eat uncooked cookie dough or batters made with raw fresh eggs. These may contain the bacteria salmonellosis which can cause an intestinal infection. Proper and complete cooking kills the bacteria that cause the infection.

Traditional eggnog made with raw eggs is also a potential risk, again because the raw egg may contain the bacteria salmonellosis. Cooking can destroy the bacteria, but people can still become ill if the eggnog is left at room temperature for several hours before being consumed. A safe alternative is pasteurized eggnog sold in grocery dairy cases, which should be kept refrigerated.

If fresh seafood is going to be a part of your holiday celebration, be sure that what you purchase has been refrigerated or properly iced. Follow proper preparation and cooking procedures for seafood. People with liver disorders or weakened immune systems have an increased risk of becoming ill if they consume raw oysters or shellfish.

For more detailed information about holiday food safety, including preparation guidelines for other meats, or food safety in general, visit <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/hometips/dhp/Holidays.htm>

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