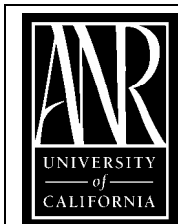
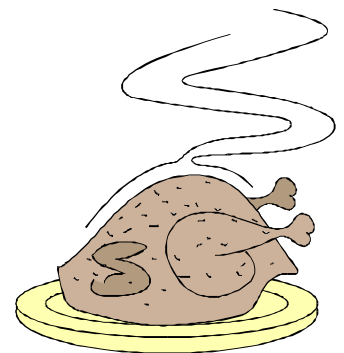


HOLIDAY FOOD SAFETY STRATEGIES

During the holiday season many home kitchens work overtime. Family and friends gather, schedules get even more hectic, and many hands want to help. It's no wonder food safety practices are likely to fall by the wayside when a crowd gathers. But many of our holiday guests are at greater risk for food borne illness, namely: the elderly, children, and anyone with a weakened immune system or chronic illness, such as heart disease, diabetes, and HIV. No one wants to spoil a holiday celebration with food borne illness. So keep your family and friends safe with the following food safety strategies:

1. Thoroughly wash hands for a full 20 seconds with warm soapy water before and after handling food, before and after handling raw food product as well as after using the toilet, diapering children, blowing your nose, playing with pets, etc.
2. Check your refrigerator temperature. Use a thermometer to ensure your refrigerator holds foods safely--between 37 and 41 degrees F. Warmer temperatures allow harmful bacteria to thrive and foods to spoil. If you'll be cooking for a crowd and are short on refrigerator space, fill a cooler or two with ice to handle extra items.
3. Thaw frozen meat and poultry safely in your refrigerator or under cold water in the sink. If you're really pressed for time, microwave thawing is fastest, but make sure you finish cooking any meat products immediately after thawing. Defrosting any perishable food on the counter is dangerous because bacteria can thrive in the outer portions of the food before the inside thaws.
4. Prevent cross-contamination. Keep raw meat and poultry and their drippings separate from other foods. Wash counters, cutting boards (plastic or non-porous) and knives before, during, and after food preparation. Use paper towels to wipe up meat and poultry drippings. Dishrags and sponges can soak up and spread bacteria throughout your kitchen; the average kitchen sponge harbors 7.2 billion bacteria.
5. Roast your holiday turkey in an oven set no lower than 325 degrees F. Avoid short-cut cooking methods that call for cooking the bird overnight.



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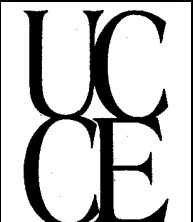
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Holiday Food Safety Strategies

6. Use a meat/probe thermometer to ensure safety and quality. Your turkey is cooked to perfection when the thermometer inserted into the inner thigh or breast--but not touching the bone--reads 165 degrees F. and turkey juices run clear. Cooking dressing in a separate casserole dish is safest, but if you prefer to stuff your holiday bird, fill the cavity loosely and make sure the center of the stuffing reaches 165 degrees F.
7. Keep cold foods cold--below 41 degrees F., and hot foods hot--above 135 degrees. Use hot plates, chafing dishes and crock pots to keep hot holiday buffet foods at a safe temperature. Serve small quantities of perishable foods, such as meat, cheese and dips and replace rather than refill containers and keep cold foods chilled by nesting dishes in bowls of ice.
8. Refrigerate or freeze leftovers within 2 hours of serving. Remove turkey from the carcass, and refrigerate in small, shallow, covered containers that protect quality and allow for rapid cooling.
9. Consume leftovers within a few days. Use your freezer for longer storage. Reheat leftovers to 165 degrees F. or until hot and steaming. Bring leftover gravy to a rolling boil before serving.
10. Clean up with a sanitizing solution of one teaspoon bleach added to one quart of water. Spray on washed counter tops, kitchen tables, and refrigerator door handles--the single dirtiest spot in a busy kitchen



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