



**TASTY HOLIDAY GIFTS: KEEP THEM SAFE, SEND THEM SAFELY**

**Keep it Safe at the Table**

The holidays will soon be upon us. You may be thinking about what kinds of goodies you can make for your family and friends. Whether you're preparing the holiday dinner, bringing a dish to share, or making sweet or savory treats as gifts, here are a few guidelines to ensure a safe and wholesome holiday.

- Hot foods should be served hot (135 degrees F. or higher) and cold foods should be served cold (41 degrees F. or lower).
- If you are bringing a dish to share, think about your travel time. People traveling long distances may want to bring non-perishable items such as bread, rolls or cookies. Those that are traveling about a half hour or less can more safely bring foods containing meat, poultry, seafood or dairy products.
- When traveling with food, keep hot foods hot by carrying them in insulated containers or wrapping them in foil and then heavy towels. Place cold foods in a cooler with ice or freezer packs.
- Breads, rolls, cookies, cakes and pies that do not contain dairy products or custards can travel safely without the worry of spoilage.
- All perishable foods should remain at room temperature for no more than two hours.

**Keep it Safe in the Mail**

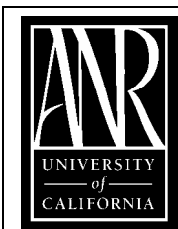
During the holidays various foods may be sent to family and friends without any thought about food safety. Plan ahead and follow these few tips to help ensure the safety of any goodies that you decide to send through the mail this holiday season. All rules apply to home-prepared or purchased foods.

- All perishable foods should be shipped cold (41 degrees F. or less) in a foam or heavy cardboard box with a cold source included. These foods include meat and poultry products, vacuum-

packaged smoked fish, some sausages and cheeses.

- All perishable foods should be shipped next-day-delivery. Let the postal service know that the item is perishable. Ask the clerk to place a "Keep Refrigerated" stamp on the package.
- It is important to ship foods at the beginning of the week. Packages mailed at the end of the week may not get delivered before the weekend and may sit at the post office or in a warehouse through the weekend.
- Most cookies, candies and baked goods are safe to ship except for items such as cheesecake or other foods that contain custard or cream filling. Here are some tips for sending baked goods:
  - Pack the food after it cools completely. If foods are packed warm, droplets of water may condense on the inside of the package, where moisture can cause sogginess and mold growth.
  - Pack the box so the contents do not shift during shipment. Use paper or packing material to help fill in the empty spaces.
  - Harder cookies such as snack or bar cookies ship better than soft cookies, which can crumble and break during shipping.
- If you receive foods by mail, immediately open the package and check the temperature of perishable items with a food thermometer. If the temperature is warmer than 41 degrees F., notify the company. Do not eat the food, it may be unsafe.
- Make sure you have addressed the package correctly and notify the recipient that the gift is in the mail.

Following these guidelines and tips will help to ensure you, your family and your friends a safe and wholesome holiday season. Always remember: "When in doubt, throw it out."



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