



Marsha Blair, CEA-FCS

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

Hockley County

ml-blair@ag.tamu.edu

## Better Living for Texans



1212 Houston, Ste.2

Levelland, Texas 79336

806-894-3159

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### DID YOU KNOW...

**APPLES** . . . You've heard, "An apple a day will keep the doctor away." While it will certainly take more than a daily apple, it is a step in the right direction. Apples are delicious, easy to carry as snacks, low in calories, a natural mouth freshener and still inexpensive.

They are a good source of fiber, it's pectin that helps to prevent cholesterol buildup in the blood vessel walls, thus reducing incident of heart disease. The insoluble fiber provides bulk in the intestinal tract, holding water to cleanse and move food quickly through the digestive system.

It's a good idea to eat apples with their skin. Almost half of the vitamin C content is underneath skin. Apples can be sweet, tart, soft and smooth or crisp and crunchy. There is an apple to suit almost everyone's taste, So enjoy APPLE's during Apple Month.

**OCTOBER IS ALSO "BREAKFAST" MONTH**

**NOVEMBER IS PECAN MONTH**

### PECAN FACTS . . .

Pecans are the only tree nut that is truly native to the United States.

Pecans are on of the largest fruit-bearing trees.

America's President, food connoisseur and gardener, Thomas Jefferson, was very taken by the flavor of pecans and had trees imported from Louisiana for his Monticello orchards.

More than 500 varieties exist today.



## Food Safety during the Holidays

Food is an important part of many holiday celebrations. But don't let food-related illness ruin your holiday. Food safety boils down to three basic rules:

- \* Keep hot food hot and cold food cold.
- \* Keep everything in the kitchen clean.
- \* Wash hands frequently.

Refrigerate cooked foods that are not served immediately. If food is left unrefrigerated longer than two hours, the chance of bacterial growth increases.



**PREVENT BACTERIA FROM GETTING INTO FOOD:** \* Hands should always be thoroughly washed with soap and warm water before handling food. \* Towels and wash cloths should be kept clean. Sponges are known to harbor bacteria, so limit their use in the kitchen. \* Counter tops and utensils should be washed with hot, soapy water between each step in food preparation.

**PROPER THAWING AND COOKING:** Turkeys and other poultry often harbor Salmonella and other organisms that can cause foodborne illness. Purchased and packaged meats, too, can be contaminated with these organisms. Proper thawing and cooking are important to avoid these illnesses. The following precautions should be taken: \* Store all raw meat products on the bottom shelf or separate from other food products in your refrigerator especially during the thawing. \* Start early and thaw turkey in a refrigerator. A 20-pound turkey will take about 3 days to thaw completely in a refrigerator. \* Don't begin cooking a turkey until it has completely thawed. \* It's safer that stuffing be cooked separately. \* Be sure meat and poultry reach the proper temperature so they are cooked thoroughly. \* Use a meat thermometer to check the temperature. Insert the thermometer into the thickest part of the meat, avoiding fat and bone. For poultry, insert it into the thick part of the thigh next to the body. \* Wash and sanitize the thermometer between uses to prevent possible contamination. \* Cook meat and poultry completely without interrupting the cooking process; an interruption could allow bacteria to grow. **LEFTOVERS:** \* Immediately refrigerate leftovers such as meat, dressing, gravy or soups in small shallow containers. \* Don't allow foods to sit several hours at room temperature this provides time for the growth of disease-causing bacteria. Refrigerate stuffing and other items separately from the bird. \* Don't cool leftovers on the kitchen counter. Divide them into smaller portions so they will cool quickly then place in the refrigerator as soon as possible. \* Serve leftovers either very cold (directly from the refrigerator) or very hot (heated to 165° F or higher). \* Cover leftovers to reheat. This helps ensure meat is heated thoroughly. \* Eat leftover turkey within 3 to 4 days and stuffing and gravy within one to 2.