

Food Safety for Holiday Entertaining

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Delicious food is often a special part of Thanksgiving, Christmas, and other holiday events. Entertaining family and friends is fun, but it's important to keep food safety in mind.

Why is food safety especially important for holiday food events?

Although food safety may not be a common problem in everyday situations, serving for large crowds means handling larger amounts of food. Consider how many people you can serve safely and how long it will take to prepare the food. If foods must be prepared ahead of time, consider whether you will have enough refrigerator space.

Holiday meals and party foods often are served buffet style. This means the food remains on the table as guests come and go. Room temperatures support the growth of bacteria that cause foodborne illness. Foodborne illness usually has symptoms of diarrhea, nausea and vomiting. Sometimes symptoms can be more severe.

What foods should I be most concerned about?

The temperature of meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, dressing, gravy, cream pies, pudding and dishes made with these foods should be watched carefully! Meat or egg sandwiches and dips or sauces made with dairy

products are also hazardous if held for long periods at room temperature.

How can I keep holiday foods safe?

If you must cook in advance:

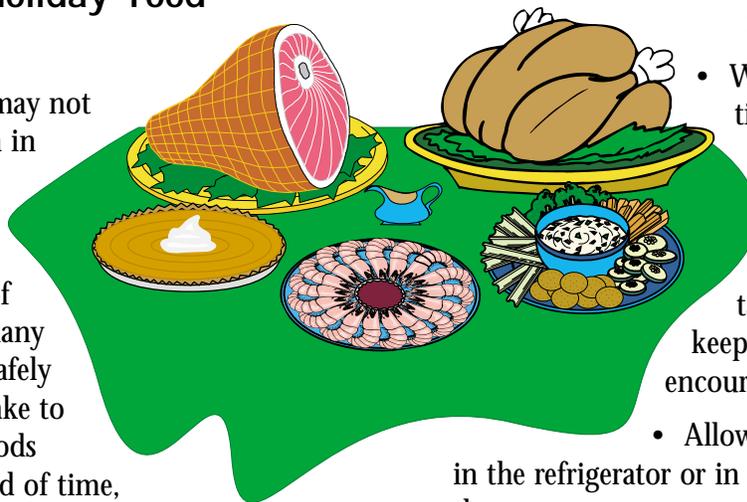
- Plan for adequate refrigerator or freezer storage.
- When cooking large quantities of foods, quickly cool and refrigerate them. Divide them into smaller portions and store them in covered, shallow containers. Deep containers keep food warm longer and encourage bacterial growth.
- Allow time to thaw frozen foods in the refrigerator or in the microwave—never on the counter.

- At serving time, reheat foods until they are hot throughout (165 degrees F). Heat "wet" foods such as soups to boiling.

When serving:

- Keep hot foods hot. Chafing dishes may or may not keep foods at the necessary temperature (140 degrees F or above). Never leave hot foods out for more than 2 hours.
- Put small quantities of food on the table. Replace them often from the heat source in the kitchen or from the refrigerator.

If buying deli foods, such as meat or deli trays, ask that they be packaged in small portions, or do this when you get home. Refrigerate these items immediately.



Any pies, pastries or cakes with cream cheese, cream, custard or soft meringue fillings or icings are perishable. Dips made with sour cream, yogurt, cottage cheese or cream cheese also are perishable. These foods need to be kept refrigerated until serving.

Avoid dishes with raw or undercooked eggs. They are especially dangerous for people with weakened immune systems—the elderly, the very young, pregnant women, and those with chronic disease.

Leftovers are another special concern with holiday foods. Any foods left from the buffet line should be discarded. Items still refrigerated or frozen, but not served, should be used within recommended times.

Make your holiday food events special and safe by following the **4 C's** guidelines.

- Keep everything **CLEAN** during food handling.
- Keep foods **CHILLED**.
- **COOK** foods thoroughly.
- Avoid **CROSS-CONTAMINATION**—the movement of bacteria from raw protein foods to cooked foods, or those to be eaten fresh.

Classic Cooked Eggnog

6 eggs
1/4 cup sugar
1/4 teaspoon salt, optional
1 quart milk,* divided
1 teaspoon vanilla
Garnishes or stir-ins, optional

In large saucepan, beat together eggs, sugar and salt (if desired). Stir in 2 cups of milk. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly, until mixture thickens and just coats a metal spoon. Remove from heat. Stir in remaining 2 cups milk and vanilla.

Cool quickly and refrigerate covered until thoroughly chilled (several hours or overnight). Just before serving, pour into bowl or pitcher. Garnish or add stir-ins, if desired. Serve immediately. Makes 1 1/2 quarts or 12 (1/2-cup) servings.

*For faster preparation, heat milk until very warm before stirring milk into eggs and sugar.

Garnishes and Stir-ins (Choose one or several.)

Chocolate curls	Orange slices	Flavored brandy or liqueur
Extracts or flavorings	Plain brandy, rum or whiskey	Maraschino cherries
Fruit juice or nectar	Whipping cream, whipped	Peppermint sticks or candy canes
Ground nutmeg	Cinnamon sticks	Sherbet or ice cream

This is a kitchen-tested recipe from the American Egg Board.

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