

Food Safety for the Holidays



*EH&S Fact Sheet
December 2007*



ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & SAFETY

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ranks unsafe storage temperatures as one of the leading causes of foodborne illness. Pathogenic bacteria grow on foods fastest when held between 40° F and 140° F. Certain foods and food practices popular during the holiday season can increase the risk for foodborne illness. The following are some tips on enjoying your holiday foods safely:

Thawing, Cooking, and Serving your Turkey

- A 20-pound turkey will thaw completely when placed in the refrigerator or at a temperature of no more than 40, in two to three days.
- Thawing the turkey completely before cooking is very important. If it is baked too soon, the inside may still be frozen and will not be hot enough to destroy disease-causing bacteria.
- Depending on the size, a stuffed turkey needs 4 3/4 to 5 1/4 hours to cook completely.
- To check if a turkey is done, insert a food thermometer into the inner thigh area near the breast of the turkey but not touching bone. The turkey is done when the temperature reaches 180 F (or a stuffing temperature of 165 F for stuffed turkeys).
- Many people are not used to juggling the large number of dishes that often go into a traditional holiday dinner. This makes it important to consider how much refrigerator space will be needed to adequately store the menu items both before and after the dinner is served.
- For safety's sake, perishable foods should not be left at room temperature for more than two hours. Traditional advice applies: Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold.

Eggnog & Cookies

One holiday favorite that carries its own set of risks is traditional eggnog made with raw eggs. Fresh eggs may contain bacteria that can cause an intestinal infection called salmonellosis. Safe alternatives are the pasteurized eggnog beverages sold in grocery dairy cases. Keep all freshly prepared or store-bought eggnog refrigerated.

Other favorites that are prepared with raw eggs are baked goods such as cookies or brownies. Eating cookie dough or batters with raw eggs carries the same risk as freshly prepared eggnog made with raw eggs.

- The ones who are often the most eager to sample cookie dough or lick the spoon are also the ones most vulnerable to foodborne illness--children.
- Commercial dough does not carry the same risk because it is made with pasteurized eggs. However, it is best to not eat raw cookie dough. Instead, enjoy your cookies after they have been properly cooked in the oven.

Please contact EH&S at 213-740-6448 for more information.

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