

# Keep the Holidays Happy

## Put Food Safety First!

'Tis the season for fond memories, gift giving, and hosting parties and family gatherings with good *food!* As you prepare your festive holiday spreads, remember to keep foods fresh and safe to eat. If food containing harmful bacteria is consumed, it could cause foodborne illness. So, when planning the big feast, follow this food safety checklist.



### ✓ *Clean Up*

- ✿ Thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water for a full 20 seconds *before* and *after* handling raw products.
- ✿ Use plastic or other non-porous cutting boards. Cutting boards should be run through the dishwasher — or washed with soap and hot water — after each use.

### ✓ *Combat Cross-Contamination*

- ✿ Store raw meat, poultry, and seafood on a plate or tray, so raw juices don't drip onto other foods.
- ✿ Use one cutting board for raw meat products and another one for salads and other ready-to-eat foods, or wash cutting boards in between each use.
- ✿ Never place cooked food on a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, or seafood *unless* the plate has been washed.
- ✿ Don't spread bacteria with dirty sponges, dishcloths, or towels. Bacteria often thrive in the moist areas of these items where bits of food may also exist. Use paper towels or freshly-cleaned sponges or cloths and soap and hot water to clean food preparation surfaces.



#### **Did You Know?**

The average used kitchen sponge harbors **7.2 billion bacteria!** Consider using paper towels or clean cloth towels.

*more*

## ✓ *Cook Safely*

- 🌿 For meat, poultry, and other dishes, use a food thermometer to make sure foods are cooked to a safe internal temperature.
- 🌿 Cook eggs until the yolks and whites are firm or reach 160 °F on a food thermometer. Don't use recipes in which eggs remain raw or only partially cooked. Cook egg dishes until they reach 160 °F.
- 🌿 Cook fish until it's opaque and flakes easily with a fork.
- 🌿 When microwaving, make sure there are no cold spots in food (where bacteria can survive). For best results, cover, stir, and rotate food for even cooking. If there's no turntable, rotate the dish by hand once or twice during cooking.
- 🌿 When reheating sauces, soups, and gravies, bring them to a boil. Heat other leftovers thoroughly to 165 °F.

## ✓ *Chill Thoroughly*

- 🌿 Make sure the refrigerator temperature is 40 °F or below and 0 °F or below in the freezer. Occasionally verify these temperatures using an appliance thermometer.
- 🌿 Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared foods, and leftovers within 2 hours.
- 🌿 Never defrost or marinate food at room temperature. Use the refrigerator. You can also thaw foods in airtight packaging in cold water (change the water every 30 minutes, so the food continues to thaw). Or, thaw in the microwave, if you'll be cooking the food immediately.
- 🌿 Divide large amounts of leftovers into shallow containers for quick cooling in the refrigerator.
- 🌿 Don't over-stuff the refrigerator. Cold air must circulate to keep food safe.

*Happy Holidays!*



If you have questions or concerns about food safety, contact:

- The **Fight BAC!**® Web site at: [www.fightbac.org](http://www.fightbac.org)
- The **U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Meat and Poultry Hotline** at (800) 535-4555 or (202) 720-3333 (Washington, DC area). The TTY number for the hearing impaired is (800) 256-7072.
- The **U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Food Information Line** at (888) SAFE FOOD.