Texas Department of State Health Services

12 DAYS of Holiday Food Safety

#holidayfoodsafety

'Tis the season for home cooked meals enjoyed in the company of family and friends. Yet, even exceptional holiday feasts are vulnerable to foodborne germs if food safety guidelines are not followed. A cooked dish not heated to the proper internal temperature or left out too long on the buffet table can produce germs, such as E. coli or Salmonella, that make you and your guests sick. Additionally, sharing meals in close quarters with large groups of people enhances the risk of picking up and passing bacterial infections.

Learn how to pass the figgy pudding – not food poisoning – by following along as we share 12 seasonal tips for **#HolidayFoodSafety.**

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Day 1: Prepping Your Kitchen

- Clean kitchen utensils and food preparation surfaces.
- Sanitize your food thermometer.
- Set the refrigerator to 40 °F or below.
- Have clean towels on hand.

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Day 2: Grocery Shopping

- Separate meat from other items in your shopping basket.
- Pick up perishable items last.
- Refrigerate perishable foods within 2 hours.

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Day 3: Cooking a Holiday Meal

- Thaw frozen turkey in the refrigerator—4 lbs. per 24 hrs.
- Do not eat raw dough or batter.
- Cook foods thoroughly.

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Day 4: Hosting a Holiday Party

- Serve food in clean dishes and with clean serving ware.
- Keep hot foods HOT and cold foods COLD.
- Have alcohol-based hand sanitizer available for guests.

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Day 5: Attending a Holiday Party

- Wash hands before and after handling food.
- Avoid foods sitting at room temperature for 2+ hours.
- Use a new plate when going back for seconds.

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Day 6: Pregnant Around the Holidays

- Avoid products made with raw or unpasteurized milk.
- Do not eat uncooked seafood.
- Watch out for hidden sources of alcohol in foods and beverages.

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Day 7: Practice Safe Hygiene

- Wash hands before and after handling food.
- Use hand sanitizer if soap and running water are not available.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.

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Day 8: Drinking Responsibly

- If you do have an alcoholic drink, have it with food.
- Beware of alcoholic content in mixed party beverages.
- Designate a nondrinking driver before the celebration begins.

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Day 9: Preventing Home Fires

- Never leave the stove unattended, even for a few minutes.
- Clear all flammable items away from the stove.
- Install a smoke alarm on every level of your home.

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Day 10: Building a Gingerbread House

- Wash hands before and after handling.
- Use non-perishable foods if left sitting out for 2+ hours.
- Keep it away from pets and pet hair, pests and dirt.

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Day 11: Enjoying Holiday Leftovers

- Discard buffet foods if left out for 2+ hours.
- Put food in shallow containers and immediately into the fridge.
- Use cooked leftovers within 4 days.
- Reheat hot foods to 165° F or warmer.

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Day 12: Healthy Holiday Recipe

- When making homemade egg nog or ice cream, use pasteurized eggs or egg products.
- You can also use a cooked egg-milk mixture: Heat it gently and use a food thermometer to ensure that it reaches 160° F.

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