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Make Food Safety Part of Your Holiday Menu
Have a Safe, Successful Holiday Feast

The Thanksgiving feast traditionally marks the beginning of the holiday season. This season, consumers can be thankful for many things including a new Web site, www.holidayfoodsafety.org, that puts food safety in the context of all the planning and preparation families put into their holiday celebration. The site includes food shopping and preparation tips, recipes, and food safety advice and activities – all in one convenient location.

The Holiday Food Safety Success Kit – developed by the non-profit Partnership for Food Safety Education (PFSE) – joins consumer support efforts of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)/Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to address consumer concerns about safe food preparation.

The FDA hotline at 1-888-SAFEFOOD (1-888-723-3366) fields consumers' questions about safe handling of the many foods that go into a delicious holiday meal, including eggs, dairy, fresh produce, and seafood. The hotline operates Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Consumers can also email questions to consumer@fda.gov This e-mail address is being protected from spam bots, you need JavaScript enabled to view it .

Cooks taking on turkey preparation are just a phone call away from advice at the USDA meat and poultry hotline, 1-888-MPHOTLINE (1-888-674-6854). The hotline operates Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. ET, and will operate on Thanksgiving Day from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. ET. Consumers can also “Ask Karen,” the FSIS virtual representative available 24 hours a day, at AskKaren.gov .

“The most critical food safety practice when preparing a whole turkey is using a food thermometer,” said Deputy Under Secretary for Food Safety Jerold Mande. “The minimum internal temperature must reach 165° F for safety.”

Large meals and a probable volume of leftovers mean consumers should do some advance preparation to get the kitchen “food safe” for the holiday, including:

- Always wash your hands with warm, soapy water before and after handling food.
- Size up refrigerator space and refrigerator temperature. Make sure you have sufficient space and plan your menu accordingly. Use an appliance thermometer to ensure that your refrigerator is indeed at or below 40° F.
- Plan your thaw. The safest way to thaw a whole turkey is in the refrigerator, so allow 24 hours thawing for each 4 to 5 pounds of turkey.
- Have one or more food thermometers on hand. You will need to measure the temperature of your turkey, other meats, seafood, side dishes and casseroles.You should use a conventional thermometer, even if your turkey has a pop-up indicator.
- Have plenty of paper towels or clean cloth towels on hand for cleaning of surfaces, drying hands, and for blotting dry fresh fruits and vegetables after rinsing. If you use cloth towels, wash them often in the hot cycle of your washer.
- Make sure you have shallow storage containers with lids on hand for safely storing leftovers within two hours of dinner.
- If guests offer to contribute a dish to the festivities, ask them to bring items that don’t require refrigeration, such as bread, rolls, beverages or cookies and cakes without cream or egg fillings.
- Plan to have a cooler on hand full of ice where you can keep beverages, freeing up refrigerator space and helping to avoid having guests going in and out of the refrigerator during meal preparation.

Consumers may spot food safety reminders at their local grocery store this holiday season. Thousands of stores across the country plan to join in promoting these safety messages and holidayfoodsafety.org
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The Holiday Food Safety Success Kit contains plenty of information on purchasing turkey, thawing, cooking methods and recipes for leftovers; a holiday planner with timeline and

shopping lists; and multiple menu options full of tested recipes. The kit also includes kids' activities so they can be part of a "food safe" celebration.

Other resources:

One week before the big meal – on Thursday, November 19 at 3 p.m. ET -- the USDA will host a live Facebook chat featuring a holiday food safety expert from the Food Safety and Inspection Service. Members of the public can submit questions about safe preparation of the big holiday meal—turkey, stuffing and other holiday favorites--and get live answers right on the USDA Facebook page. For more information about the chat or to submit questions in advance, visit the USDA Live page at http://www.usda.gov/live and become a fan of USDA on Facebook at http://www.facebook.com/usda
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And for more information on food safety, go to www.fda.gov/food and www.foodsafety.gov

About the Partnership for Food Safety Education

The Partnership unites industry associations, professional societies in food science, nutrition and health, consumer groups, and the federal government: U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Food and Drug Administration, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to educate the public about safe food handling and preparation. The Partnership, a non-profit organization, is the creator and steward of the Fight BAC!® campaign, a food safety education program developed using scientifically-based recommendations and resulting from an extensive consumer research process. Fight BAC!® materials are fully accessible online at www.fightbac.org and utilized by consumers, teachers, dietitians, public health officials, and extension agents across the United States. For more information on the Partnership for Food Safety Education contact info@fightbac.org or 202-220-0651.

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