



**Food Safety and Inspection Service**

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# News Release

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## USDA Provides Tips to Keep Holiday Food Safe at Home or When Traveling

**WASHINGTON, Dec. 19, 2017** — The most wonderful time of the year is already here. Some of us stay home for the holidays; others travel to visit relatives or friends. Regardless of the destination, one thing that does not change is that food is always part of the celebration.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is here to share food safety tips to ensure the food you prepare for your friends and family is safe and your holiday season won't be remembered for the wrong reason - food poisoning.

### Holiday Food Safety 'To Do' List for Cooking and Traveling

Let's start our 'to do' list with USDA's four steps to food safety: CLEAN, SEPARATE, COOK and CHILL.

- **Clean** your hands for 20 seconds with soapy water. Always serve food on clean plates and avoid reusing plates that previously held raw meat and poultry.
- **Separate** raw and cooked foods so you don't cross contaminate.
- **Cook** using a food thermometer to make sure food reaches a safe minimum internal temperature.
- **Chill** leftovers within two hours of cooking. Keep track of how long items have been sitting on the buffet table and discard anything that has been out longer than two hours.

During the holiday season there are a wide variety of traditional dishes and family recipes that require specific preparations. When cooking these delicious party foods, make sure to cook them to the correct internal temperatures to destroy food poisoning bacteria.

- Cook all raw beef, pork, lamb and veal steaks, chops, and roasts to a minimum internal temperature of 145°F before removing meat from the heat source. For safety and quality reasons, allow meat to rest for at least three minutes before carving or consuming. For reasons of personal preference, you may choose to cook meat to higher temperatures.
- Cook all raw ground beef, pork, lamb and veal to an internal temperature of 160°F.
- Cook all poultry to a safe minimum internal temperature of 165°F as measured with a food thermometer.

If you are invited to a holiday party and plan to bring your famous holiday dish or if you are traveling to visit relatives or friends, be sure to keep hot foods hot (140°F or above), by carrying them in insulated containers. If you're transporting cold food, keep it cold (40°F or below), by carrying it with cold sources such as ice or frozen gel packs. The best way to ensure that food is being held at a safe temperature while you are traveling is to pack and use an appliance thermometer in the cooler.

Lastly, for our tech savvy holiday cooks, we recommend our smartphone and tablet application, the FoodKeeper. With more than 150,000 downloads on both the Android and iOS smartphones, the FoodKeeper is

quickly establishing itself as the quick reference go-to guide for safe food storage and preparation. A recent update just integrated food product recall announcements into the app. Available in English and Spanish, the FoodKeeper has information on safe storage of leftovers and 500+ different food and drink items.

Consumers can learn more about key food safety practices at [Foodsafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov) and follow [@USDAFoodSafety](https://twitter.com/USDAFoodSafety) on Twitter. Consumers with questions about food safety can call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854) or chat live with a food safety specialist in English or Spanish at [AskKaren.gov](https://www.AskKaren.gov), available from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. EST, Monday through Friday.

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