



## NEWS RELEASE

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### HOLIDAY COOKING

Fancy dips, tempting hors d'oeuvres, inviting canapés, delightful desserts, and the Thanksgiving turkey--the holidays are filled with scrumptious culinary delights. Don't ruin the holidays, though, with food poisoning.

#### Avoid Food borne Illness

During the holidays or anytime, refrain from eating certain foods. Such foods as raw oysters; egg drinks, mousse or bread pudding, unless made with pasteurized eggs or an egg substitute; soft-boiled eggs; steak tar tare; and rare or medium hamburger can harbor bacteria that cause food poisoning. It is particularly important that young children, the elderly, pregnant women and those who are ill or whose immune systems are compromised **not** eat raw or undercooked animal products or raw oysters unless they have consulted their physicians.

#### Most Food Poisonings Are Preventable

Follow two very important rules: Keep hot food hot and cold food cold. And keep everything in the kitchen clean. Cooking food to a temperature of at least 165 degrees Fahrenheit (F) kills most bacteria that cause food poisoning. Keep cooked foods that are not served immediately at a holding temperature between 140 degrees and 165 degrees F. Do not leave food un-refrigerated longer than two hours or the chances of bacterial growth increase.

Most bacteria get into food through careless handling. Be sure to follow these simple steps:

- Hands should always be washed before handling food.
- Towels and washcloths should be kept clean since bacteria can linger in those used repeatedly between launderings.
- Countertops and utensils should be washed with hot, soapy water between each step in food preparation. Bacteria from raw meat and poultry can get into other foods if both touch the same surfaces. Also, be cautious not to use wooden utensils or cutting boards for raw meat and poultry. These surfaces are not smooth and can harbor bacteria in the ridges. (Any time you use wooden utensils or cutting boards, they should be scrubbed thoroughly with soapy water and rinsed well before and after each use. Do not use them at all if the utensil or board is scored or cut.)

#### Follow These Guidelines

Because many warm-blooded animals, turkeys and other poultry, often harbor salmonella organisms, proper thawing and cooking are important to avoid food borne illness.

- Be sure to wash hands thoroughly with warm water and soap before handling or boning meat or poultry.
- Cook meat and poultry to the temperature indicated in the following chart to make sure it is cooked thoroughly. Use a meat thermometer, inserting the tip into the thickest part of the meat and avoiding fat or bone. For poultry, insert the tip into the thick part of the thigh next to the body.
- Partial cooking should be avoided because it allows bacteria to grow. Cook meat and poultry completely at one time.
- Frozen meat or poultry\* should be cooked one and a half times the period required to prepare thawed food. For example, if 60 minutes is required to cook a dish, allow 90 minutes if the dish is frozen. (\*Turkey is an exception. It should always be completely thawed before cooking.)

- Do not cool leftovers on the kitchen counter. Divide them into smaller portions so they will cool more quickly and put them in the refrigerator as soon as possible.
- Cover leftovers to reheat. This helps maintain moisture and ensures that meat is heated all the way through.

### **General Home Cooking Guidelines**

#### Cooking Meat and Poultry

Meat and poultry that are cooked throughout to these temperatures are generally safe to eat.

\* Note: Home cooking temperatures are slightly higher than commercial cooking temperatures to provide a safety margin in case of variation in the accuracy of home thermometers.

Consumer guidelines from U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Services; and U.S. Food and Drug Administration

#### Turkey Preparation

Follow these guidelines to prepare a turkey:

- Start early and thaw the turkey in the refrigerator or in a place where the air temperature is no higher than 40 degrees. A 20-pound turkey takes about two or three days to thaw completely.
- Be sure the turkey is thawed completely, until no ice appears in the inner cavity and the meat is soft. Be cautious: If the inner cavity is still frozen or even partially frozen when you put the turkey in the oven, the outside of the bird will be done before the inside, and the inside temperature will not be hot enough to destroy disease-causing bacteria.
- If you mix stuffing a day ahead, pre-mix only the dry ingredients. Mixing moist ingredients ahead of time offers the opportunity for bacteria to grow. It is safer to cook stuffing separately. However, if you do stuff the bird, do so just before cooking it. Stuff it loosely so the stuffing cooks thoroughly.
- Insert a meat thermometer into the center of the thickest part of the thigh, breast or stuffing. Temperatures should register 180 degrees F for turkey, 165 degrees F for stuffing and 170 degrees to 175 degrees F for boneless roasts.
- After the meal, immediately refrigerate leftovers such as meat, dressing, gravy or soups in small shallow containers. Letting these foods sit several hours at room temperature allows time for the growth of disease-bearing bacteria. Refrigerate stuffing and other items separately from the bird.
- It is important to serve leftovers either very cold (directly from the refrigerator) or very hot (at least 165 degrees F).

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