

Don't let foodborne illness spoil the holidays

November 16 2012, by Paul Schattenberg



To help prevent foodborne illness during the holidays, the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service suggests following basic food safety steps — clean, separate, cook and chill — and to throw out “questionable” leftovers. Credit: Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

While the holidays are a time for surprises, one holiday surprise to be avoided at all costs is foodborne bacteria, according to a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service expert.

"Foodborne bacteria can make people sick and take the joy out of the holidays," said Dr. Mary Bielamowicz, AgriLife Extension nutrition specialist and licensed dietitian, College Station. "Watching out for contamination and taking the proper steps to ensure better food preparation and preservation safety will reduce the chance of your [holidays](#) being spoiled by a food-related illness."

Bielamowicz said making sure all kitchen items—knives, cutting boards, cookware, serving pieces, dishes, food storage containers, etc.—are thoroughly cleaned before use is the first step toward fighting bacteria.

"Make sure you follow the basic food safety rules, which are to clean, separate, cook and chill," she said. "Be sure you and anyone helping you washes their hands thoroughly with warm water and soap before handling any food."

She said raw meat should be separated from fruits and vegetables in the grocery store and refrigerator, as well as on the kitchen counter.

"Make sure your refrigerator is set at 40 degrees or lower and keep the door closed as much as possible during food preparation and storage," she said. "Perishable foods should be refrigerated within two hours after purchase."

"Cook foods to their proper temperature and refrigerate them promptly after cooking to reduce opportunities for bacterial growth."

Bielamowicz said leftovers should be eaten within three to four days after refrigeration.

"Remember that food may often smell or even taste fine after that time, but it still may have enough bacteria to make someone ill," she said.

"The general rule for food safety when it comes to leftovers is: 'When in doubt, throw it out.'"

Bielamowicz said the nonprofit Partnership for Food Safety, whose stated mission is to "end illness and death from foodborne infections in the United States," has developed a Holiday Food Safety Success Kit available to families wanting to learn more about the basics of food safety.

The kit, which can be found at www.holidayfoodsafety.org , provides food safety advice and meal planning information. It also contains information on buying and cooking a turkey and has a holiday menu planner, holiday recipes, and fun and educational activities for children.

More information on food safety can be found at the Fight BAC! website at www.fightbac.org as well as at www.foodsafety.gov , which provides consumer [food safety](#) information from various government sources.

Provided by Texas A&M University

Citation: Don't let foodborne illness spoil the holidays (2012, November 16) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-11-dont-foodborne-illness-holidays.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.