

How to ship food gifts without risk

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(HealthDay)—Homemade food gifts can make loved ones afar feel closer, but it's important to take extra safety precautions to prevent food poisoning, according to the American Academy of Nutrition and

Dietetics (AAND).

Bacteria that cause food-borne illnesses grow quickly at temperatures between 40 [degrees](#) and 140 degrees Fahrenheit, potentially doubling every 20 minutes, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. When shipping perishable items, make sure they are kept below 40 degrees, AAND advises. Let the recipient know a perishable package is on the way and be sure someone will be home to receive it.

Even foods that are smoked, cured or fully cooked should be kept cold. This can be done using dry ice and foam or heavy corrugated cardboard packaging, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service recommends.

Whenever possible, ship non-perishable food gifts in airtight containers. These items stay fresher longer and are safely stored at room temperature, AAND notes. Non-perishable gift ideas include:

- Dried beef and fruits
- Nuts
- Dehydrated soups
- Fruit drink mixes
- Canned meat and fish, such as corned beef, shelf-stable hams and anchovies
- Dense and dry baked goods such as fruitcakes and biscotti
- Hard candies and homemade sweets, such as pralines and toffee
- Individually wrapped sugar cookies
- Condiments in unbreakable packaging, including packets of hot sauce or Cajun seasonings.

Those who receive perishable foods in the mail should check their package thoroughly as soon as it arrives. Perishable food should arrive frozen or at least partially frozen. Use a [food](#) thermometer to check its

temperature and discard immediately if it tops 40 degrees Fahrenheit, according to the experts.

More information: The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services provides more information on [mail order food safety](#).

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