

Don't let food poisoning ruin your holiday celebration

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(HealthDay)—Party guests always seem to wind up in the host's kitchen,

but too many cooks boost the risk of mistakes that could lead to food poisoning, according to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

The group says it's also important to keep [food safety](#) in mind when preparing homemade food gifts and holiday buffets. It offers these tips:

- Wash hands before, during and after preparing food. It's also important to wash when switching from one task to another.
- All kitchen surfaces—including appliances, countertops, cutting boards and utensils—should be kept clean throughout the cooking process. Use hot, soapy water.
- Never cut raw meat, poultry or fish on the same cutting board as foods like fruits and vegetables that don't have to be cooked. Using color-coded cutting boards can make it easier to remember which one to use for each food.
- Use different utensils for stirring, tasting and serving.
- Use a food thermometer to ensure meat and poultry are cooked to the proper temperatures.
- To prevent the growth of harmful bacteria, never let perishable foods stand at room temperature for more than two hours. Use a thermometer to ensure the refrigerator is set below 40 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Defrost food in the refrigerator or the microwave, never on a counter or in warm water. Foods thawing in the refrigerator should be covered and placed on the bottom shelf to avoid contamination. Cook food defrosted in microwaves immediately afterwards.
- Never eat raw cookie and cake batter or dough.

Be careful, too, with holiday leftovers. Remember to:

- Store leftover [food](#) in shallow containers no more than two inches deep.

- Refrigerate or freeze leftovers within two hours.
- Remove cooked turkey from the bone, and store it separate from stuffing and gravy. Eat leftover turkey within four days, stuffing and gravy within two.
- Reheat leftovers to 165 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Discard any foods that may be unsafe to eat.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers more [food safety tips](#).

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