



HOLIDAY GATHERINGS AND POTLUCKS

Bringing food to a gathering is a common practice around the holidays. Failure to handle food safely can lead to foodborne illness. Use this information when preparing, handling and serving your favorite dishes.

Preventing Cross-Contamination

- Wash hands properly before handling or eating food
- Use a single use utensil or place food in an individual cup/container to taste test before serving
- Avoid eating from plate while in the serving line
- Use utensils, napkins, toothpicks or paper to pick up foods instead of bare hands
- Use a clean plate each time you pass through the serving line



Hot and Cold Holding

- Hold hot foods at 135°F or higher by using chafing dishes, warming trays or slow cookers
- Hold cold at 41°F or lower by placing cold food containers in larger containers filled with ice

Handling Leftovers

- Harmful bacteria grow fastest between 41°F and 135°F, particularly room temperatures. Minimizing time in this range, called the temperature danger zone, reduces growth of these harmful bacteria.
- Throw away or compost any perishable food left at room temperature for more than 4 hours
- Refrigerate perishable leftovers as soon as the meal is over
- Place foods like soups, stews or dips in shallow containers before refrigerating for quicker cooling
- Eat leftovers within 7 days



Dealing with Allergens

- Label foods containing allergens such as milk, eggs, tree nuts, shellfish and mollusks, fish, soy, peanuts, wheat and sesame
- Provide separate serving utensils for each dish, as using the same utensil for different foods could result in allergen cross-contact
 - For example, a utensil used to serve breakfast casserole and then used to serve hash brown potatoes would introduce an egg allergen into the potatoes