



## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

# News Release

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GOVERNOR

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### FOOD SAFETY TIPS FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

HONOLULU – The Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) would like to wish everyone a healthy and happy holiday season. Safe food handling is always important when preparing food, but is especially important around the holidays. No one wants to give friends and family unwanted presents. The DOH Sanitation Branch offers helpful tips on food safety:

#### PLANNING

- ❖ Determine your menu and decide how you will serve your food.
  - Will you be able to keep hot foods above 140°F if they will be left out for more than 2 hours and cold foods at 45°F or below?
    - Use chaffing dishes or keep large portions in oven until ready to serve.
    - Replace foods often to keep them hot.
    - Use beds of ice to keep cold foods cold.
  - When shopping and making multiple purchases, shop for your grocery items last.
  - Do not leave perishable foods in the car.
    - It is also a good idea to bring an ice chest to store your milk and other perishables if you have a long drive home, or if you have other stops to make.
    - Make sure all perishables are placed in your refrigerator or freezer **as soon as you get home**.
    - Always check the expiration dates of packaged foods.
    - Make sure that both you and grocery store employees bag all raw meats and poultry separate from all other foods to prevent blood and other raw meat and poultry juices from contaminating any other foods.

If you are planning on purchasing a frozen turkey, or other large portions of frozen meat, you will need to do so 4-5 days in advance in order to safely thaw it in your refrigerator.

- ❖ You can also defrost a small turkey using the microwave if you are going to cook it immediately after thawing. Follow your manual carefully (due to differences in microwave ability and power).

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- ❖ You may also thaw a turkey in a sink.
  - After cleaning the sink, put the turkey in a heavy plastic freezer bag secured with a twist tie.
  - Cover the bird with cold water, changing the water every 30 minutes.
  - Depending on the size of your turkey, this will take from 4 to 12 hours.

Storing foods for holiday meals can also be a real challenge. During holidays we typically buy more food than usual and quite often different types of food than normal.

- ❖ Be careful that you do not overload your refrigerator. Putting large amounts of hot food in your refrigerator at one time can cause your refrigerator temperature to become unsafe. You should have a thermometer in your refrigerator to ensure that the temperature is being kept at 45°F or below.

### **SAFE FOOD HANDLING**

- ❖ Always wash your hands before and after handling any food.
- ❖ Keep your kitchen, dishes and utensils clean.
- ❖ Always serve food on clean plates. **Never use plates that were previously used to hold or prepare raw poultry or meats.** Bacteria that may have been present in raw meat blood and juices can cross-contaminate the food to be served.

### **COOK MEATS AND POULTRY THOROUGHLY**

If you are cooking foods ahead of time for your party, be sure to cook foods thoroughly at safe temperatures.

- ❖ You must use an accurate cooking thermometer in order to be sure that your food has been safely cooked to proper temperatures. These can be purchased at most large grocery stores or cooking supply shops.
  - When taking temperatures, make sure that the tip of the probe is in the center of the thickest portion of meat being checked.
    - Cook beef, veal and lamb to at least 145°F.
    - Bake whole poultry to 180°F.\*\*
    - Poultry breasts to 170°F.\*\*
    - Ground turkey and all other poultry to 165°F.
    - All other meats, ground red meats and fish not intended to be eaten raw should be cooked to 160°F.

**\*\*USDA recently recommended the higher temperature for whole poultry and poultry breasts\*\***

- ❖ Use shallow containers.
- ❖ If you are cooking large amounts of food in advance, divide cooked food into shallow containers to store in the refrigerator or freezer until serving. This encourages rapid, even cooling.
  - Reheat hot foods rapidly to 165°F.
  - Arrange and serve food on several small platters rather than one large platter.

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- Keep food hot in the oven (set at 200-250°F), or cold in the refrigerator until serving time. This way the food will be held at a safe temperature for a longer period of time.
- **Replace** empty plates rather than adding fresh food to a dish that already has food on it. Many people's hands may have been taking food from the dish, which has already been sitting out at room temperature.

### **THE TWO HOUR RULE**

- ❖ Perishable foods should not sit at room temperature for more than two hours.
- ❖ Keep track of how long foods have been sitting out on the table.
- ❖ Discard anything that was left out for more than two hours.

### **KEEP THE HOT FOODS *HOT* AND THE COLD FOODS *COLD***

- ❖ Hot foods should be held at 140°F or warmer. On the serving table you can keep hot foods hot with chaffing dishes, slow cookers or warming trays.
- ❖ Cold foods should be held at 45°F or below. Keep foods cold by nesting dishes in bowls of ice, otherwise use small serving trays and replace often.

### **LEFTOVERS**

After the meal it is always important to put away all leftovers promptly, remembering the two hour rule.

- ❖ All meats should be cut off the bone and placed in shallow containers (less than 2" deep).
- ❖ Other foods should also be placed in shallow containers and refrigerated or frozen promptly. Don't forget to refrigerate the noodles and rice too!
- ❖ Use your leftover meats, turkey, stuffing and other perishable cooked foods within three to four days. If you are not going to use these foods in this time frame, consider dividing them up and freezing them for later use.
- ❖ Always reheat all foods rapidly to 165°F prior to eating.

### **FOODBORNE BACTERIA**

Bacteria are everywhere, but a few types especially like to crash parties.

- ❖ Staphylococcus aureus, Clostridium perfringens, and Listeria monocytogenes frequent people's hands and steam tables.
- ❖ E. coli, Salmonella sp. and other harmful microorganisms may be present in undercooked or contaminated foods.

Unlike microorganisms that can cause food to spoil, **harmful or pathogenic bacteria cannot be smelled or tasted**. Prevention is the most effective way to keep foods safe. If illness does occur, contact a health professional.

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