



The 12 Days of Holiday Food Safety

'Tis the season for home cooked meals enjoyed in the company of family and friends. Yet, even exceptional holiday feasts are vulnerable to foodborne germs if food safety guidelines are not followed. A cooked dish not heated to the proper internal temperature or left out too long on the buffet table can produce germs, such as [E. coli](#) or [Salmonella](#), that make you and your guests sick. Additionally, sharing meals in close quarters with large groups of people enhances the risk of picking up and passing bacterial infections.

Learn how to pass the figgy pudding – not [food poisoning](#) – by following along as we share 12 seasonal tips for #HolidayFoodSafety.

Day 1: **Prepping Your Kitchen**

- Use hot water and soap to clean the sink, countertops, cutting boards, pans and cooking utensils.
- Sanitize your food thermometer and calibrate it if necessary.
- Set the refrigerator temperature to 40 °F or below.
- Have plenty of clean towels on hand for the meal preparation and clean-up.

Source: FightBac.org

Day 2: **Grocery Shopping**

- Keep meat separate from other items in your shopping basket.
- Pick up perishable items, like meat and produce, after non-perishables.
- Refrigerate perishable food within 2 hours—1 hour when the temperature is above 90 °F.

Source: USDA.gov

Day 3: **Cooking a Holiday Meal**

- Thaw turkey in the refrigerator, in a sink of cold water that is changed every 30 minutes, or in the microwave.
- Do not eat raw dough or batter made with flour or eggs.
- Be sure to cook foods thoroughly to safe minimum internal temperatures.

Source: Foodsafety.gov

Day 4: **Hosting a Holiday Party**

- Always serve food in clean dishes and with clean, dedicated serving ware to avoid cross-contamination.
- Keep hot foods HOT (140 °F or warmer) and cold foods COLD (40 °F or colder).
- Practice safe food handling to prevent foodborne bacteria. Have hand sanitizer on hand for guests if soap and running water are not readily available.

Source: [USDA.gov](https://www.usda.gov)

Day 5: **Attending a Holiday Party**

- Wash your hands before and after handling food—for yourself, as well as those coming after you in the buffet line.
- Avoid foods that have been sitting at room temperature for two hours or more.
- If you go back for seconds, ask for a new plate rather than adding fresh food to a plate that already has had food on it.

Source: [USDA.gov](https://www.usda.gov)

Day 6: **Pregnant Around the Holidays**

- Avoid raw or unpasteurized milk and products made with it, such as soft cheeses.
- Do not eat refrigerated smoked seafood unless it is in a cooked dish, such as a casserole, or it is canned or shelf-stable.
- Watch out for alcohol-containing holiday punches and eggnogs.

Source: [Foodsafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov)

Day 7: **Practice Safe Hygiene**

- Always wash your hands before and after handling food.
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue (or your upper sleeve or elbow) when you cough or sneeze.

Source: [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)

Day 8: **Drinking Responsibly**

- If you do have an alcoholic drink, have it with food. Alcohol can lower blood sugar and interact with diabetes medicines.
- Beware of alcoholic content in punches, egg nog, and other mixed beverages (especially if pregnant).
- Designate a nondrinking driver before any party or celebration begins.

Source: [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)

Day 9: **Preventing Home Fires**

- Never leave the stove unattended, even for a few minutes – and turn off the burner if you leave the kitchen.
- Keep pot holders, wooden utensils, food packaging, and towels away from the stove.
- Install a smoke alarm on every level of your home—following this precaution cuts your risk of dying in a fire by half.

Source: [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)

Day 10: **Building a Gingerbread House**

- Wash hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds before and after constructing.
- Use non-perishable building materials if your house is left sitting out for more than two hours.
- Keep your house away from possible sources of contamination, including pets and pet hair, pests and dirt.

Source: [USDA.gov](https://www.usda.gov)

Day 11: **Enjoying Holiday Leftovers**

- Keep track of how long foods have been sitting on the buffet table and discard anything left out for two hours or more.
- Put food in shallow containers and immediately into the fridge for cooling.
- Use cooked leftovers within four days.
- Reheat hot foods to 165 °F.

Source: [USDA.gov](https://www.usda.gov)

Day 12: **Healthy Holiday Recipe**

- Egg nog or homemade ice cream
 - Use pasteurized eggs or egg products, or a cooked egg-milk mixture.
 - To make a cooked egg-milk mixture, heat it gently and use a food thermometer to ensure that it reaches 160°.

Source: [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)