



BETTER LIVING
FOR TEXANS
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

BETTER LIVING for *Texans*

Committed to serving Texans and to improving lives

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Victoria County

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Most Common Holiday Food Safety Answers

With cold weather finally here and more holidays right around the corner, many are now thinking about what to cook or buy for holiday meals. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that about 1 in 6 people get sick each year from contaminated food, with 128,000 hospitalizations, and 3,000 deaths annually (<http://www.cdc.gov/foodnet/data/fast-facts.html>).

Following are a few holiday food safety questions commonly asked of the USDA, and the USDA's answers:

Q: The instructions on the ham said it would take 4 hours to cook, but the thermometer read 160°F after 3 hours. We will not be eating for 2 more hours- can I leave it out on the counter covered with foil?

A: It is not a good idea to leave any food out at room temperature for more than 2 hours since any bacteria present can multiply to high enough levels to cause illness. It is better to cover the ham and keep it in a 200°F degree oven until you are ready to serve it. Check it with a food thermometer to make sure it does not go below an internal temperature of 140°F while it is in the oven.

Q: I baked some pies to serve tomorrow and left them sitting on the counter. Should I have refrigerated them?

A: Yes. Foods made with eggs and milk, like pumpkin pie, cheesecake, or custards must first be baked to a safe internal temperature of 160°F then refrigerated within 2 hours. When moist foods containing high protein are left out at room temperature, bacteria multiply quickly. But it is not necessary to refrigerate most other cakes, cookies, or breads unless they have perishable filling or frosting.

Q: I received a gift of a smoked ham sent through a mail order company. It was packed in a box with no dry ice or frozen gel packs and it was not cold when I received it. Because it is smoked, does that make it safe to eat?

A: Poultry and hams are smoked for flavor, not preservation (with the exceptions of country hams and dry sausages, which are safe to eat because of their dryness and high salt content). If a food product labeled "Keep Refrigerated" arrives warm, do not eat it and contact the company. It is the shipper's responsibility to deliver the product on time, properly packaged, and handled safely.

For more food safety information, contact the USDA at 1-888-674-6854 or at www.AskKaren.gov and have a safe and healthy holiday season!



One kind word can



warm three winter months.



~Japanese proverb



The **Better Living for Texans** program provides free lessons for limited resource audiences on topics such as basic nutrition, food safety, and food budgets.

For more information please contact:
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
Phone: (361) 575-4581

<http://agrilife.org/victoriacountybl/>

Winter Crisp

Ingredients

2 TBSP cinnamon
3 TBSP margarine
1/2 cup sugar
3 TBSP all purpose flour
1 tsp grated lemon peel
5 cups sliced apple, unpeeled
1 cup fresh cranberries
2/3 cup rolled oats
1/3 cup brown sugar, packed
1/4 cup whole wheat flour

Makes 6 servings

320 calories per serving

From: <http://www.whatscooking.fns.usda.gov>

Directions

1. Wash hands and any cooking surfaces.
- Filling:
2. Combine sugar, flour, and lemon peel in medium bowl and mix well.
 3. Stir in apples and cranberries.
 4. Spoon into a 6-cup baking dish.
- Topping:
5. Combine oats, brown sugar, flour, and cinnamon in small bowl.
 6. Stir in melted margarine.
 7. Sprinkle topping over filling.
 8. Bake at 375 degrees for 40 minutes or until filling is bubbly and top is brown.
 9. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Handwashing for Healthy Holidays

Handwashing is the key to staying healthy during the holiday hustle and bustle!

According to the American Society of Microbiology, only 75% of females and 58% of males wash their hands as much as they should. There are 229,000 germs per square inch on frequently used faucet handles (over 4000 times more than the average toilet seat!) You cannot see, smell, or taste germs but they can make you very sick. Since your hands are the most exposed part of your body, it is very important to wash them regularly to keep yourself healthy. No one wants to be sick during the holidays and miss all of the festivities!

Wash your hands: before eating, preparing or serving food, especially raw meats; when ever your hands look, feel, or smell dirty; after using the bathroom; after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; when you have been around others who are sick; after touching pets; after taking out the trash; after changing diapers or helping a child use the bathroom; and after touching common objects (money, doors, keyboards, phones, pens, etc).

You can use hand sanitizer when you don't have time to wash or you cannot get to a sink, but the best way to remove germs from your hands is to wash them for **20 seconds** with soap and warm water, rubbing them together while washing. Singing the Happy Birthday song twice is about 20 seconds. Be sure to get under your nails and the back of your hands too. After 20 seconds, rinse thoroughly with warm water and dry hands with a paper towel if possible.

Resources: www.scrubclub.org and www.asm.org

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