



*Nova Scotians across the province enjoy celebrating holidays with friends, family — and food. You can stop food-borne illness from spoiling your holiday by following these tips from the food safety specialists at the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture.*

**Before You Begin**

- Always wash your hands before and after handling food.
- Keep your kitchen, utensils and dishes clean.
- Serve food on clean plates, not on those that have been used with raw meat, poultry or fish.

**Preparing and Serving Holiday Buffets**

- When preparing food ahead of time, cook to a safe internal temperature. Cool quickly to 4°C (40°F) by dividing foods into small, shallow containers for storing in the refrigerator until serving.

**Traveling with Food**

- While traveling, hot foods must be kept hot and cold foods kept cold. Hot foods can be wrapped in towels, newspapers, or foil to maintain 60°C (140°F).
- Cold foods can be stored in a cooler containing ice or freezer packs to keep at 4°C (40°F).

**Special Holiday Foods**

- Store-bought eggnog is a pasteurized product and as such does not contain raw eggs. If making eggnog at home, raw eggs can be substituted with pasteurized eggs. If raw eggs are used then heat the egg-milk mixture to 71°C (160°F) or until it coats a metal spoon, then refrigerate at once in smaller, shallow containers to cool quickly.
- Apple cider that is labeled as a pasteurized product is the safest alternative. If unpasteurized cider is used, bring it to a boil before serving, especially if it is to be served to the young or elderly.

- Vegetables and herbs that are prepared at home and have been stored in oil, must be kept refrigerated and discarded after one week.
- When baking and using raw eggs in cookie dough and cake batter, it is advisable that the raw batter not be eaten, especially by young children who would be at a higher risk.

**Take-out Foods**

- Order meat trays in several smaller platters, rather than two or three larger ones. This allows you to keep extras refrigerated until needed.
- Foods arriving hot must be served within two hours otherwise they must be kept hot at 60°C (140°F) or refrigerated at 4°C (40°F) and reheated to 74°C (165°F) when needed.
- Cold perishable foods that cannot be served within two hours should be refrigerated at 4°C (40°F) until serving.
- Reheat hot foods to 74°C (165°F) and keep at 60°C (140°F) using crock pots or warming trays. Cold foods can be maintained at 4°C (40°F) by nesting dishes in bowls of ice.
- If perishable foods cannot be kept hot or cold, then serve small bowls or trays of food, keeping the remainder hot or cold in the kitchen and replace with fresh full bowls rather than topping off older foods left at room temperature.
- Perishable food should not sit out at room temperature for more than two hours. If it does, the food must be discarded.

## Leftovers

- Foods that have not been left in the danger zone, 4°C - 60°C (40°F-140°F), for more than two hours can be refrigerated or frozen for later use.
- Thick meats and whole turkeys should be sliced and cooled in trays no deeper than two inches. Thick stews and soups should also be no deeper than two inches and should be stirred periodically to speed up cooling while in the refrigerator. All foods should be loosely covered while cooling and tightly covered when cooled. Do not overstock the refrigerator as it will reduce circulation and cooling.
- Refrigerated turkey and other cooked dishes should be eaten within four days while gravy and stuffing should be consumed in two days.

- When reheating leftovers, sauces, soups, and gravies should be brought to a boil prior to serving and other leftovers heated to 74°C (165°F) or until steamy hot throughout.

These four simple rules will help ensure a happy and healthy holiday season: cook foods to proper temperatures; chill foods properly in the refrigerator, when shopping and when storing leftovers; keep foods separate to avoid cross contamination; and keep your hands, utensils and work space clean and free of bacteria.

For further information on food safety visit the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture Food Safety website at <http://novascotia.ca/agri/>

