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Holiday Meals: Prepare a bacteria-free buffet

K-State food scientist shares tips for preventing foodborne illness

K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. – The holidays are in full swing and serving platters of safely prepared food to family and friends is important for good health. Kansas State University food scientist Karen Blakeslee says enjoying the meal can be dependent on a simple food safety rule: Keep cold foods cold, and hot foods hot.

One tip she recommends is using smaller serving dishes to replenish food more often.

“Warming trays, slow cookers, chaffing dishes and other gadgets can keep hot foods hot,” Blakeslee said. “Cold foods can be kept in the refrigerator until serving time or served on ice on the buffet.”

Once a serving dish is almost empty, trade it for a fresh serving dish and do not add new food to a used dish of food, Blakeslee said. She suggests keeping an eye on the clock.

“Hot or cold perishable food should be used within two hours when left at room temperature,” Blakeslee said.

Refrigerate leftovers within two hours and divide large amounts of food into smaller containers to chill quickly.

“Many family recipes may contain raw or lightly cooked eggs,” Blakeslee said. “It is risky to consume raw or undercooked eggs, especially for pregnant women, young kids, older adults and those with weakened immune systems.”

Blakeslee said to be mindful about your friends and family by safely preparing foods such as eggnog, homemade Caesar salad dressing, ice cream or other recipes with raw eggs. Heating eggs to 160 degrees Fahrenheit or using pasteurized eggs can keep away unwanted foodborne illness.

Blakeslee, who also is coordinator of [K-State's Rapid Response Center for Food Science](#), publishes a monthly newsletter called [You Asked It!](#) that provides numerous tips on food safety.

More information also is available from [local extension offices](#) in Kansas.

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Rapid Response Center, <https://www.rrc.k-state.edu>

You Asked It! newsletter, <https://www.rrc.k-state.edu/newsletter>

K-State Research and Extension local offices, <https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/about/statewide-locations.html>

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