



# K-State Extension Connection

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The mission of K-State Research and Extension Family and Consumer Sciences is to link education with life experiences to help people improve their lives, their families and their communities. Family and Consumer Sciences professionals support essential life skills including Community Development, Healthy Lifestyle Choices, Leadership & Volunteer Development, Relationship Development and Resource Management.

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## **Bacteria ... The Unwanted Holiday Guest**

Ever have a stomach ache after eating a hefty holiday feast? You may think that you just ate too much, but it could be a case of food-borne illness. Here are ways to handle perishable foods safely and enjoy a healthy holiday!



### **Planning Ahead for Food Safety**

Prepare perishable foods (those containing meats, eggs, dairy products, and fruit or vegetable mixtures) no more than 1 day before a meal, unless the food will be frozen. For example, assemble a casserole 1 day in advance, put it in the refrigerator, then bake it on the day of the meal, allowing an extra 15 to 20 minutes of cooking time. Similarly, cut up fruits and vegetables for a salad or relish tray 1 day before the meal, then put them in covered containers on refrigerator shelves that are above any raw meat. Purchase fresh turkey products no more than 2 days before the meal. For longer storage, freeze it. Allow 24 hours of refrigerated thawing time for each 5 pounds of food weight. You can leave a thawed turkey in the refrigerator for up to 2 days. Do NOT rinse off the turkey, since that only splashes germs around. Cook a turkey until a food thermometer shows that the thickest part has reached an internal temperature of 165 degrees F.

### **Protecting Potluck Foods**

Travel no longer than 30 minutes with perishable foods. Keep hot foods hot by carrying them in insulated containers, or wrap the dish in foil and heavy towels. Place cold foods in a cooler with ice or freezer packs. On arrival, place cold foods in the refrigerator and hot foods in a heated oven to keep them hot. If traveling for longer distances, take non-perishable foods instead, such as uncut fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, crackers, breads or unopened beverages.

**Serving Strategies**

Do not leave perishable foods at room temperature for longer than 2 hours, including preparation, travel and serving time. Avoid adding fresh servings to perishable foods that have been sitting out. Instead, replace empty dishes with fresh foods in clean dishes. Serve small bowls or trays of foods with about the number of servings that will be eaten in 30 minutes or less.

**Keeping Leftovers Safe**

Discard perishable foods left at room temperature for more than 2 hours. Refrigerate or freeze hot foods in shallow containers at a depth of 2 inches or less until cool. Eat all perishable leftovers within 4 days, or for longer storage, freeze them. Thaw perishable frozen foods in the refrigerator or heat them in a microwave oven, but do not thaw them at room temperature. If you thaw food in a microwave oven, continue to heat it until it is fully cooked. Reheat hot foods to 165 degrees F. or higher.

For additional information, contact the Wildcat Extension District, Crawford County, 620-724-8233, Labette County, 620-784-5337, Montgomery County, 620-331-2690, Pittsburg Office, Expanded Food and Nutrition Education (EFNEP), 620-232-1930 and Wilson County, 620-378-2167. Our website is <http://www.wildcatdistrict.k-state.edu/> or follow us on Facebook: Wildcat Extension District.

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