

Beat The Buffet Blues This Holiday Season

“Home Food Safety...It’s In Your Hands”

Provides Secrets For Safe And Festive Holiday Dining

(NAPSA)—During the holidays, food is the centerpiece for celebrating with family and friends. As many people plan to toast the season with a buffet or potluck meal rather than the more traditional sit-down dinner, holiday hosts must take extra care to safeguard guests from food poisoning.

According to a recent national consumer survey conducted by the American Dietetic Association and the ConAgra Foods Foundation (Impulse Research Corporation), the majority of diners will participate in buffet-style (70 percent) or potluck (55 percent) gatherings this holiday season. And, of the nearly 40 percent who plan to host holiday get-togethers, they’ll be serving popular festive foods such as cheeses (53 percent), pasta salads, dips/dressings (53 percent) and deviled eggs/egg-based salads or other fancy egg-based entrées (49 percent), foods that can grow harmful bacteria quickly when left out on a buffet table for more than two hours.

“When hosting a festive gathering, make sure guests leave with their holiday gifts — but not a case of the ‘buffet blues,’ also known as food poisoning,” said Carolyn O’Neil, registered dietitian and national spokesperson for the ADA/ConAgra Foods Home Food Safety program. “It is important to take extra precautions when serving holiday buffets and potlucks because they often sit out for long periods of time while guests snack, chat and revel in holiday cheer.”

Making a List and Checking it Twice

Whether guests are naughty or nice, these helpful hints will ensure potluck and buffet meals not only taste good but are safe for your guests to enjoy.

1. When shopping at the supermarket, pick up meats last and ask to have them bagged separately from other groceries.

2. Don’t forget to check the



“sell-by” date. If it has passed, don’t buy the product.

3. Wash hands before, during and after food preparation. Sing your favorite holiday carol for at least 20 seconds while lathering up.

4. Defrost meat in the refrigerator or in the microwave on the defrost setting, never on the counter.

5. Use two cutting boards, one for raw meats and another for fruits and vegetables. Color-coded cutting boards can help you remember which is which.

6. Use separate spoons and forks to taste, stir and serve food.

7. Always use a meat thermometer to check the doneness of foods. Favorite holiday foods like whole turkey should be cooked to at least 180°F and ham to at least 140°F. Remember to reheat leftovers to 165°F and bring gravy to a boil before serving a second time.

8. Foods should not be left out of refrigeration for more than two hours. Encourage guests to visit the refrigerator for those second and third rounds.

9. Always refrigerate foods promptly below 40°F.

Simple Solutions

To help reduce foodborne illness, the American Dietetic Association and the ConAgra Foods Foundation have partnered in a national education initiative, “Home Food Safety...It’s in Your Hands®.” For more simple home food safety tips and holiday recipes, visit www.homefoodsafety.org, or call ADA’s Consumer Nutrition Information Line at 800/366-1655.