

HOLIDAY HINTS

Keep Your Holiday Buffet Fresh—And Safe

(NAPSA)—'Tis the season for parties and family gatherings, and good food is at the top of the invite list. However, even the most carefully planned menu can be spoiled if food isn't properly prepared and served.

When planning a holiday buffet or dinner party, be sure to keep that holiday spread fresh and safe to eat. Wal-Mart and the Partnership for Food Safety Education's Fight BAC!™ campaign recommend following these simple, safe food-handling steps when entertaining during the holiday season:

Serve safe. Foods that are left out for long periods of time—such as a party buffet—should be kept at a suitable temperature:

- Place hot cooked foods in chafing dishes, crock pots and warming trays to keep them 140°F or warmer.

- Keep cold foods 40°F or colder by placing them in bowls of ice. To add festivity to your table, use food coloring to give some color to your ice cubes.

- Place small quantities of food on the buffet table and replenish it often using clean dishes. Be sure food is not left out longer than two hours.

Clean. To help avoid the spread of bacteria, wash everything—including your hands—with hot, soapy water.

- Use plastic or other non-porous cutting boards. Cutting boards should be run through the dishwasher—or washed in hot, soapy water—after use.

- Use paper towels to clean up kitchen surfaces. Or, if using cloth towels, wash them often with bleach in the hot cycle of the washing machine.

Separate. Keep raw meat, poultry and seafood—and their juices—away from ready-to-eat foods.

- Store raw meat, poultry and seafood on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator so juices don't drip onto other foods.

- If possible, use one cutting board for raw meat products and another for salads and other foods which are ready to be eaten.

- Never place cooked food on a plate which previously held raw



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meat, poultry or seafood.

Cook. Cook foods thoroughly to safe internal temperatures.

- Use a food thermometer, which measures the internal temperature of cooked meat and poultry, to make sure that the meat is cooked all the way through. If a thermometer is not available, do not eat meat or poultry that is still pink inside.

- Cook eggs until the yolks and whites are firm, not runny. Don't use recipes in which eggs remain raw or only partially cooked, unless the eggs are pasteurized. When making eggnog, be sure to only use pasteurized eggs.

- Cook fish until it is opaque and flakes easily with a fork.

- Bring sauces, soups and gravy to a boil when reheating. Heat other leftovers thoroughly to 165°F.

Chill. Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared food and leftovers within two hours. Food safety experts recommend setting the refrigerator at 40°F and the freezer unit at 0°F and occasionally checking these temperatures with an appliance thermometer.

- Never defrost food on the kitchen counter. Use the refrigerator, cold running water or the microwave.

- Divide large amounts of leftovers into small, shallow containers for quick cooling in the refrigerator.

- With poultry and other stuffed meats, remove the stuffing and refrigerate it in a separate container.

For more information on practicing safe food handling during the holiday season and year round, visit www.fightbac.org or www.walmartstores.com/news/.