

# Share the Gift Of Home Food Safety This Season

(NAPS)—Enjoying food with family and friends is one of the highlights of the holiday season and frequently, everyone wants to join in to help, but too many cooks in the kitchen can result in an increased risk of foodborne illness. The American Dietetic Association and ConAgra Foods offer 10 tips to avoid common kitchen blunders when preparing meals, buffets and even homemade food gifts this holiday season.

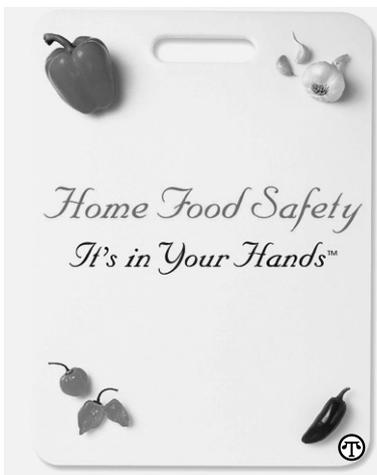
“During the holidays, food is at the center of many celebrations and festivities,” said Carolyn O’Neil, registered dietitian and national spokesperson for the ADA/ConAgra Foods Home Food Safety program. “No one wants to get sick during this season, so it’s important to take extra precautions when preparing, cooking, serving and storing food.”

## 10 Tips For Holiday Home Food Safety

- Wash hands before, during and after food preparation. Proper hand washing may eliminate nearly half of all cases of foodborne illnesses. Remember to wash hands when switching tasks, such as handling raw meat and then cutting vegetables.

- Keep kitchen surfaces such as appliances, countertops, cutting boards and utensils clean throughout meal preparation with hot, soapy water.

- Always use two cutting boards: one for raw meat, poultry and fish and the other for ready-to-eat foods, like fruits and vegetables. Make it easy to remember by using color-coded cutting boards,



one for raw meats and one for ready-to-eat foods.

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

- Use a meat thermometer. It is the **ONLY** reliable way to determine the doneness of your food and ensure that food is cooked to proper temperatures. (Do not rely on “clear juices” to tell that the turkey is done.)

- Refrigerate food within two hours of being served to prevent the growth of harmful bacteria that can lead to food poisoning. This is especially important when serving buffets.

- Use a refrigerator thermometer and make sure it’s set at below 40 degrees Fahrenheit.

- Never allow foods to defrost at room temperature, on the counter or in warm water. Defrost food only in the refrigerator or in the microwave. When defrosting food in the refrigerator, remember to cover raw meat

and place it on the bottom shelf so juices won’t drip onto other foods. When defrosting food in the microwave, cook it immediately afterward.

- If taking food to parties, make sure to observe the same safety habits as at home—keep foods well-refrigerated and cook them to proper temperatures.

- When baking, avoid eating foods containing raw eggs like cookie dough or cake batter. Raw eggs may contain harmful bacteria that can lead to food poisoning.

## Joy to the Leftovers

Holiday meals often result in tasty leftovers. Follow these tips to make sure you don’t get sick the second time around.

- Store leftovers in shallow containers (2 inches or less).

- Refrigerate/freeze leftovers within two hours of cooking the food.

- Remove turkey from the bone and store it separately from the stuffing and gravy; slice breast meat; legs and wings may be left whole.

- Use turkey within 3-4 days; stuffing and gravy, within 1-2 days.

- Reheat leftovers to 165°F.

- When in doubt, throw it out!

To help reduce foodborne illness, the American Dietetic Association and the ConAgra Foods Foundation are partners in a national education initiative, *Home Food Safety...It's in Your Hands*®. Visit [www.homefoodsafety.org](http://www.homefoodsafety.org), or call ADA’s Consumer Nutrition Information Line at 800/366-1655 for more simple home food safety tips.