

Ring In New Holiday Traditions For Today's Safe Kitchens

(NAPSA)—According to a new survey by the American Dietetic Association and the ConAgra Foods Foundation, Americans will spend more time cooking and baking with their children during the next few weeks than at any other time of year, with four out of five saying it's important to pass on holiday cooking traditions. However, some of these traditions may be a recipe for food poisoning.

"During the holidays, people who rarely cook any other time of year are suddenly in the kitchen helping prepare traditional holiday meals," says Carolyn O'Neil, spokesperson for the ADA/ConAgra Foods *Home Food Safety... It's in Your Hands*® program. "Since the holidays are such an important time for families to share lasting memories, it's also a great opportunity for parents to brush up on their home food safety skills and make sure they're passing down these same traditions to their children."

This season, throw out your old holiday habits and ring in a new tradition of proper home food safety with a few simple tips.

Keep Tabs on Temps

Almost everyone (96 percent) serves a main meat dish at their holiday dinners—but few are cooking it properly. According to the ADA/ConAgra Foods survey, more than two out of three home cooks do not consistently use a meat thermometer to check the doneness of meats—putting themselves and their guests at risk of food poisoning.

To keep holiday revelers merry, always use a meat thermometer to make sure meats are cooked to a safe internal temperature. Whole turkeys should be cooked to 180 degrees Fahrenheit; holiday hams and pork roasts to 160 degrees Fahrenheit, briskets and beef roasts to at least 145 degrees Fahrenheit.

Limit Leftover Lingerings

According to the survey, left-



over food lingers after almost every holiday meal (99 percent), but few feasters take the necessary precautions to safely enjoy foods a second time around. Nearly three out of four Americans admit to eating leftovers cold without reheating them first, a habit that can be particularly dangerous when it comes to gravy—a popular dish that graces nine out of 10 holiday spreads.

Begin a new tradition this holiday season by reheating leftovers to 165 degrees Fahrenheit before eating, and always bring gravy to a steady boil on the stove before serving it the first, second and even third time around.

Avoid the All-Day Buffet

Nine out of 10 holiday meals fall into the categories of "traditional sit-down" or "buffet-style," and more than half of these festive feasts last longer than two hours—the point at which bacteria begins to multiply rapidly on perishable food items.

Keep guests out of harm's way by setting out buffet items in two-hour shifts (about the length of time as two holiday CDs played back-to-back!). After each shift, place uneaten food back in the refrigerator—set at below 40 degrees Fahrenheit—and replenish the buffet or dinner table with fresh holiday favorites.

Curb Your Urge to Sample

For many Americans, sampling food while baking holiday treats is as much a tradition as giving gifts. More than nine out of 10 home cooks confess to licking the batter, eating raw cookie dough or

dipping their fingers into uncooked batter to sample—and allowing their children to do the same. But most don't know that this habit can pose a health risk: eating dough or batter that contains raw eggs can lead to salmonella poisoning. To be safe, wait until baked treats are fully cooked before digging in.

Since resisting the urge to sneak a bite of raw cookie dough can be especially difficult for children, encourage them to take the "Cookie Rookie Pledge," and reward them for curbing their cookie dough craving with an official "Cookie Rookie Certificate of Achievement," downloadable from www.homefoodsafety.org.

FREE Holiday Chef Countdown Calendar

Experts say it takes 21 days to break a bad habit—fortunately there's plenty of time before the holidays to make over your holiday mistakes. Visit www.homefoodsafety.org for your free, magnetic dry-erase Holiday Chef Countdown Calendar (while supplies last), featuring 21 quick fixes for your kitchen faux pas. Or, download a printer-friendly version on the spot.

For More Tips on a Safe and Festive Holiday

The ADA/ConAgra Foods *Home Food Safety...It's in Your Hands* program educates consumers that home food safety is a serious issue and provides solutions so Americans can easily and safely handle food in their own kitchens. This program complements government-sponsored food safety initiatives that speak to the leading critical food-handling violations by emphasizing the following four key messages: 1) Wash hands often; 2) Keep raw meats and ready-to-eat foods separate; 3) Cook to proper temperatures; 4) Refrigerate promptly below 40 degrees Fahrenheit.

For more information, visit www.homefoodsafety.org.