



## DOH Safe Food Handling Tips: THANKSGIVING & HOLIDAY MEALS

A popular way to celebrate the holidays, or any special occasion in Hawaii, is to invite family and friends to a potluck. However, when food is left out for long periods of time, it can open the door for uninvited guests – bacteria that cause foodborne illness. DOH Sanitation Branch share a few tips to help you host a safe holiday party.

PLANNING. When out shopping, plan to shop for your groceries last and do not leave perishable foods in the car. All raw meats should be bagged separately from all other foods to prevent blood and other raw meat juices from contaminating any other foods. It is a good idea to bring a cooler with ice or ice packs to store your perishable foods if you have a long drive home or if you have other errands. Remember to put away all groceries in your refrigerator/freezer as soon as you get home. You should have a thermometer in your refrigerator to ensure the temperature is maintained at 41°F or colder.

PREPARATION. Now that you have all the ingredients for your holiday meal, there are a few different ways to safely thaw out a frozen turkey:

- Store in the refrigerator 4 – 5 days in advance of your holiday meal.
- In a microwave, if you are going to cook it immediately after thawing.
- In a clean sink, with water. Place turkey in a heavy bag secured with a twist tie. Cover the heavy bag with cold water, changing the water every 30 minutes. Depending on the size of the turkey, this may take anywhere from 4 – 12 hours.

Never use containers or plates that were previously used to hold or prepare raw meats without properly washing. Bacteria that may be present in raw meat blood and juices can cross contaminate the food if placed on unwashed containers and plates. Use separate cutting boards for raw meats and ready-to-eat foods. Also, try to prepare all raw meats at the same time to avoid cross contamination of ready-to-eat foods.

PERSONAL HEALTH & HYGIENE – WASH YOUR HANDS. If you have been ill with vomiting/diarrhea within the past 2 days, do not handle or prepare foods for others. Always wash your hands carefully with soap and water before handling food and after handling raw meats or using the bathroom.

WASH ALL FRUITS AND VEGETABLES. Wash all fruits and vegetable thoroughly prior to preparation and serving.

COOK MEATS THOROUGHLY – USE A THERMOMETER. Cook meats until juices run clear. When using a thermometer to check the temperature of your cooked meat, insert the probe into the thickest portion of meat. Below is a list of different types of meat and the proper cook-to temperature:

- Beef, veal, lamb, and fish to at least 145°F.
- Ground beef, veal, lamb and fish to at least 155°F.
- Turkey, chicken and other poultry, and stuffed foods to at least 165°F.

USE SHALLOW CONTAINERS. If you are cooking large amounts of food in advance, divide cooked food into shallow containers (less than 2" deep) to store in the refrigerator/freezer until serving. When ready to serve, reheat foods rapidly to 165°F. Foods may also be held hot in an oven (set at 200°F - 250°F) or in the refrigerator until it is served.

KEEP HOT FOODS HOT AND COLD FOODS COLD. Foods that have been cooked to the proper temperatures should be held hot at 135°F or higher by using the oven, chaffing dishes, slow cookers or warming trays. Foods to be held cold should be held at 41°F or lower by nesting dishes in containers of ice. You may also portion out food in small serving trays and replace often (every 2 hours).

THE 2-HOUR RULE & LEFTOVERS. Perishable foods should not sit at room temperature for more than two hours unless they are being held hot or held cold.

After the meal, it is important to put away or discard any leftovers. All meats should be cut off the bones and placed in shallow containers. All other foods should also be placed in shallow containers and refrigerated promptly. Use all leftover foods within 3 – 4 days. If you are not going to eat the foods within this time frame, consider freezing them for later use.

Safe food handling is important. Festive times for giving and sharing should not include sharing foodborne illness.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact your local Sanitation Branch:  
<http://health.hawaii.gov/san/contact-us/>