



Consumer Federation of America

For Immediate Release
December 18, 2012

Contact:
Chris Waldrop, 202-797-8551

HAVE A “FOOD-SAFE” HOLIDAY SEASON!
Tips from Consumer Federation of America

Washington D.C. -- Consumer Federation of America today offered tips to consumers to have a “food-safe” holiday season this year. Food, especially raw foods, can be contaminated with deadly foodborne pathogens. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, each year 48 million Americans (1 in 6) are sickened by contaminated food, 128,000 are hospitalized and 3,000 die. Children, the elderly and those with compromised immune systems are at particular risk of becoming sick from foodborne pathogens.

“Consumers can take steps in the kitchen to help reduce their risk of foodborne illness,” said Chris Waldrop, director of the Food Policy Institute at Consumer Federation of America. “These steps are important when preparing meals for family and friends not just during the holidays, but anytime during the year. Consumers should follow these four important safe food handling steps: Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill.”

Clean

- Wash hands and surfaces often.
- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food and after using the bathroom, changing diapers and handling pets.
- Wash cutting boards, utensils and countertops before and after preparing each food item.

Separate

- Bacteria can be easily spread throughout the kitchen by cross-contamination. Separate raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs from ready-to-eat foods and be sure to wash all surfaces, utensils and cutting boards.
- Use one cutting board for fresh produce and a separate cutting board for raw meat, poultry and seafood.
- Do not place cooked food on an unwashed plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, seafood or eggs.

Cook

- Cooking food to the proper internal temperature can kill harmful bacteria that can cause foodborne illness. Use a food thermometer to be sure that food is cooked to a safe internal temperature, especially for meat, poultry and egg dishes. The U.S. Department of Agriculture provides a chart of safe cooking temperature [here](#).

- Cook beef, pork, lamb and veal steaks, chops and roasts to a minimum internal temperature of 145°F, as measured by a food thermometer. For safety and quality, allow the meat to rest for at least three minutes before serving.
- Cook ground beef, pork, lamb and veal to an internal temperature of 160°F as measured by a food thermometer.
- Cook poultry to an internal temperature of 165°F as measured by a food thermometer.
- Heat leftovers thoroughly to 165°F; soups, sauces and gravy should be brought to a boil when reheating.

Chill

- Refrigerate or freeze meat, poultry, eggs and other perishable items promptly to slow the growth of harmful bacteria. Maintain a constant refrigerator temperature of 40°F or below and a freezer temperature of 0°F or below.
- Do not let raw meat, poultry, eggs, cooked food or fresh cut fruits or vegetables sit at room temperature for more than two hours before putting them in the refrigerator or freezer.
- Do not defrost foods at room temperature. Instead, defrost foods in the refrigerator, in cold water or in the microwave.
- Refrigerate or freeze leftovers in shallow containers. Wrap and cover leftovers and consume within 3-4 days. When in doubt, throw it out!

In addition to these steps, consumers should take care when shopping for food in the grocery store.

- Separate raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs from fruit, vegetables, and other foods in your grocery shopping cart, grocery bags and in your refrigerator.
- Check that fresh cut fruits and vegetables, like packaged salads and pre-cut melons, are refrigerated at the store before buying. Do not buy fresh-cut items that are not refrigerated.
- Buy cold foods last. Plan to drive directly home from the grocery store. Refrigerate foods promptly after arriving home.
- Avoid canned foods that are dented, leaking, bulging or rusted. These are warning signs that dangerous bacteria may be growing in the can.

Additional food safety tips can be found at www.holidayfoodsafety.org and www.foodsafety.gov.

Consumer Federation of America is an association of nearly 300 non-profit consumer organizations that was established in 1968 to advance the consumer interest through research, education and advocacy.