



Charlie Crist
Governor

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Health officials issue holiday food safety tips

(PENSACOLA, FL) – As Floridians get ready for the holiday season, the Escambia County Health Department emphasizes the importance of safe food preparation and storage to prevent possible foodborne illnesses.

“While family celebrations are being prepared, everyone should practice proper food hygiene,” said Dr. John Lanza. “Floridians should wash their hands and counter tops thoroughly before and after preparing foods to help eliminate bacteria. Foods should be cooked at the appropriate temperature and leftovers should be stored properly.”

Factors that can contribute to foodborne illnesses include:

- Improper food storage (inadequate refrigeration temperature or hot holding temperature). Safe refrigeration temperature is less than 41 degrees Fahrenheit, and safe hot holding temperature is greater than 140 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Improper washing of hands and fingernails
- Improper cooling of foods. Safe cooling of foods is getting the foods to less than 41 degrees Fahrenheit within a four-hour time period.
- Cross contamination (such as from uncooked meat to salad ingredients)
- Improper cleaning and sanitizing of eating and cooking utensils, work areas and equipment
- Contamination of food, utensils and equipment from flies, roaches and other pests

Tips to prepare turkeys safely:

- A whole turkey should be cooked at an oven temperature of 325 degrees Fahrenheit.
- An 8-12 pound unstuffed turkey should be cooked for 2-3 hours.
- Preparers should use a meat thermometer. Every part of the turkey should reach a minimum internal temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Frozen turkeys should be kept frozen until ready to thaw prior to cooking.

Individuals with liver disease or diabetes or who have had gastric surgery or are immune-compromised should avoid eating raw oysters or other raw animal protein during the holidays. Oysters that are thoroughly cooked or have been post-harvest treated can be consumed by people with these conditions to minimize the risk of infection from *Vibrio vulnificus*.

For more information about food safety, visit www.doh.state.fl.us/environment/community/food/. Other websites for food safety and preparation are www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Lets_Talk_Turkey/index.asp, www.eatturkey.com/consumer/thanks.html and <http://www.fightbac.org/foursteps.cfm?section=4>.



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