



Get answers on holiday food safety

I am hosting relatives over the holidays this year; several are elderly and are a bit frail, so I want to be sure I'm following all food safety guidelines. Where can I go for a refresher?

A great place to start is <http://foodsafety.gov>, a veritable one-stop shop of food safety information from the federal government. Check out the "Keep Food Safe" area and scroll down to review "The Basics: Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill," — the Web site offers information from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Partnership for Food Safety Information. All provide similar basic information — click on any one, and if you don't find what you're looking for, click on another and chances are you'll find it.

You may also be interested in scrolling down and clicking on "For Specific Groups" and choosing "Older Adults." The information offered here includes everything from a brief overview from the FDA and a detailed, 24-page brochure (available as a PDF) from the USDA. Among the basic guidelines you'll find are to avoid serving seniors sprouts, raw fish, raw or lightly cooked eggs (including meringue and homemade egg nog), and unpasteurized juices.

In addition, specific holiday-related food safety information is offered

under the category of "By Events and Seasons." You can find details on thawing and cooking turkey; making sure homemade pies, eggnog and other holiday goodies are safe; and keeping food safe in holiday buffets.

Audio podcasts are also available in each area listed above.

You can also ask experts specific questions by e-mail or by phone. In fact, Ohio State University offers its own Food Safety Hotline. Since July 2009, thanks to a partnership between The Kroger Co. and the Center for Innovative Food Technology, the hotline has been staffed from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. every weekday — and that includes Thanksgiving Day. In Ohio, call toll-free at 800-752-2751, or anyone can e-mail a question to the hotline at foodsafety@osu.edu.

In addition, you may contact the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline for answers in English or Spanish from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays (or 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Thanksgiving Day) by calling 1-888-674-6854. And, the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service of the USDA offers the "Ask Karen" service at http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Food_Safety_Education/Ask_Karen/index.asp. You can type in your food safety question and receive a list of questions and answers related to your inquiry.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu.



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**For the week of
Nov. 15, 2009**

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