



From the Food Bank Kitchen

Holiday Food Safety

With the hectic nature of the holiday season, let's look at the importance of keeping food safe. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that each year roughly 1 in 6 Americans (or 48 million people) get sick, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die of foodborne illness, a disease transmitted to people by food. (See www.cdc.gov for more info). Here are some guidelines to follow to keep your holiday dining safe.

Before the cooking begins:

1. Clean all utensils, cookware, countertops and any other areas where you will be preparing and serving foods.
2. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds both before and after preparing foods. Remember to wash your hands after handling raw meats BEFORE you touch anything else (like ready-to-serve foods or raw fruits and vegetables).
3. Make sure any meat dish you are using is defrosted properly. **NEVER** leave meat on the counter at room temperature to thaw. There are 3 safe ways to defrost: a) place in the refrigerator in a sealed container away from fresh produce, b) place the meat (in a sealed container or plastic bag) in cold water and change the water every 30 minutes, or c) microwave the item on low power following defrosting directions for your microwave; then finish cooking item fully.
4. Wash all produce (avoid using bleach or detergents on fresh produce).

During the cooking process:

1. To prevent cross-contamination: Keep raw meats away from ready to eat foods and fresh produce. **NEVER** use the same knife and cutting board for raw meats and fresh fruits and vegetables without washing them thoroughly first.
2. Make sure you do not mix up your preparation equipment, such as using the same spoon to stir the pie filling as well as another dish. Divide cooked foods into shallow containers for fridge storage until ready to serve for rapid, even cooling.
3. Cook your food thoroughly and use a thermometer to check that it's reached its minimum internal temperature to reduce bacteria. This will vary for each food, varying from 145 to 165°F. See chart on www.fsis.usda.gov to learn more.

When serving:

1. **Never leave perishable food out at room temperature for more than 2 hours.**
2. Keep hot food HOT and cold food COLD. When serving buffet style, keep hot food over a heat source and serve cold food on ice. Use separate serving spoons to serve each item, to avoid cross-contamination for those with food allergies.
3. Do **NOT** reuse a plate that had raw meat to serve cooked food. Wash thoroughly between uses.

See reverse side for more tips and recipes for 2 delicious potato side dishes

Most packaged food has a date on it. But what do those dates really mean? Read on to keep your family and friends safe AND to know what to keep and what to toss. For more info, see www.fsis.usda.gov food safety pages.

Sell by: this date indicates how long a product can be displayed for sale in a store. This doesn't mean the food is not fresh after that date, but you should buy it before the sell by date has passed. See the table below for some guidelines.

Best by: this date indicates the day the food product will be at its peak quality. This is decided by the manufacturer and doesn't indicate safety, only quality.

Use by: this is also a recommendation by the manufacturer. It's the last date of peak quality.

Expiration date: For most foods, if it is past the expiration date listed, that doesn't necessarily mean it is unsafe or has to be thrown away.

Do not use infant formula past its expiration date. For baking mixes, the baking powder or yeast may not work as well.

Remember that food that is **frozen** can be kept safely almost indefinitely, although quality of taste may be compromised.

Canned foods can be kept for years, unless they are heavily dented, rusted, or swollen.

Refrigerator Storage of Fresh or Uncooked Products	
Product	Storage Times After "Sell By" Date
Poultry	1 or 2 days
Beef, Veal, Pork and Lamb	3 to 5 days
Ground Meat and Ground Poultry	1 or 2 days
Fresh Variety Meats (Liver, Tongue, Brain, Kidneys, Heart, Chitterlings)	1 or 2 days
Cured Ham, Cook-Before-Eating	5 to 7 days
Sausage from Pork, Beef or Turkey, Uncooked	1 or 2 days
Eggs	3 to 5 weeks

Once the party is over:

1. Divide food into smaller or shallow containers (for faster cooling time) and place directly in the freezer or refrigerator.
2. Throw away any food that has been out for more than 2 hours, and all dips. Dips are at high risk for bacterial contamination due to people who may “double dip” (dip, take a bite, and then dip chip or veggie in again).
3. Use cooked leftovers within 4 days. Reheat leftovers to a temperature of 165° as measured with a food thermometer.
4. Store turkey and stuffing in separate containers. Use leftover gravy within 1-2 days, reheating it to a boil.
5. Use a cold water bath in the sink to chill bowls or pans of hot food more quickly before refrigerating, and stir often.

Additional safe kitchen practices:

1. Sponges can carry excessive amounts of bacteria. To sanitize them, choose one of these options: run the sponge through the dishwasher, boil it in water on the stove, or microwave water-soaked non-metallic sponges for 60 seconds.
2. Marinate raw meats, poultry, and seafood in the refrigerator away from ready to use foods and fresh produce. Do not serve the marinade without cooking it first. Do not baste the food with the uncooked marinade.
3. Cut the fat off the meat/poultry you purchase. This will help lower calories and it will minimize your intake of pesticides and unhealthy chemicals.

Sources: www.homefoodsafety.org
www.nutrition411.com
www.fightbac.org

Crispy Baked Potato Skins

About 6 –8 servings

Source: Cheapcooking.com

4-5 medium Russet or other baking potatoes*
3 Tbsp olive oil
1 Tbsp grated Parmesan
¼ tsp garlic powder
¼ tsp paprika

¼ tsp ground black pepper
Shredded cheddar (or other cheese)
Optional toppings: diced scallions, diced cooked bacon, leftover shredded chicken and barbecue sauce, salsa, chopped cooked broccoli, sour cream, or Ranch dressing

Directions: Preheat the oven to 400°F while you scrub potatoes and prick a few holes in them with a fork. Bake them for 1 hour and let cool a bit so you can handle. Cut potatoes open lengthwise and scoop out the insides with a small spoon, leaving about ¼ inch of the insides in the skin. *Save the insides for mashed potatoes or mashed potato pancakes (see recipe below).* Mix together oil, Parmesan, garlic powder, paprika, and pepper. Brush the potato skins all over with the oil mixture and bake at 475°F for 6 minutes, then flip over and bake another 5-6 minutes. Turn skin side down and add some shredded cheese and whatever you like on your potato skins, such as diced cooked bacon, diced scallions, salsa, leftover cooked shredded chicken with barbecue sauce, and/or cooked chopped broccoli. Bake a few more minutes, top with sour cream if desired, and serve.

* You can pre-bake these potatoes the day before and chill, if desired, before preparing this recipe.

Mashed Potato Cakes

About 4 servings

Adapted from foodnetwork.com, Sara Moulton

2 cups chilled mashed potatoes*
2 Tbsp vegetable oil, for frying
½ c all-purpose flour, for dredging

1 lightly beaten egg
1 tsp salt (kosher/coarse, if available)
¼ tsp pepper

Directions: Divide the chilled mashed potatoes into 8 equal portions. Use your hands to form ½ inch thick patties. Mix the flour with the salt and pepper in a shallow dish. Coat the potato patties in the flour mixture. Heat the oil in a large non-skillet over medium-high heat. Add the potato cakes to the pan and reduce the heat to medium-low. Cook until they have formed a golden crust, 15-20 minutes. (Peek underneath using a spatula before turning). Turn and cook the other side until golden brown, about 15 minutes. Season with additional salt and pepper and serve hot.

*To make mashed potatoes from scooped out insides of the crispy potato skins recipe above, mix hot potatoes with about ½ cup of warm milk, 2 Tbsp of softened unsalted butter, and salt and pepper to taste. Serve warm if serving immediately, or chill overnight and fry up the mashed potato pancakes a day or two later.