

Column Name - The Heartland Minute

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“Preparing a Bacteria-Free Holiday Meal”

We are in the midst of meal prep time for the holidays and serving platters of safely prepared food to family and friends is important for good health. The best tip out there is to keep cold foods cold, and hot foods hot.

Warming trays, slow cookers, chaffing dishes and other gadgets can keep hot foods hot. Cold foods can be kept in the refrigerator until serving time or served on ice on the buffet. Another great tip is to use smaller serving dishes to replenish food more often. Once a serving dish is almost empty, trade it for a fresh serving dish and do not add new food to a used dish of food. Keep an eye on the clock to take note of how long food has been out. Hot or cold perishable food should be used within two hours when left at room temperature.

Refrigerate leftovers within two hours and divide large amounts of food into smaller containers to chill quickly. Many family recipes may contain raw or lightly cooked eggs. It is risky to consume raw or undercooked eggs, especially for pregnant women, young kids, older adults and those with weakened immune systems. Heating eggs to 160 degrees Fahrenheit or using pasteurized eggs can keep away unwanted foodborne illness. Some foods that utilize raw eggs as an ingredient, that you need to keep an eye on, include eggnog, homemade Caesar salad dressing, and ice cream.

The Holidays are a special time to gather, enjoy good food, and be thankful for the many blessings we have all received throughout the year. Best to leave it at that and stay healthy by consuming safely prepared foods. Merry Christmas, everyone!

Information comes from K-State University food scientist, Karen Blakeslee.

For more information regarding Agriculture and Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, or K-State Research and Extension call the office at 620-583-7455, email me, Ben Sims, at benjam63@ksu.edu, or stop by the office which is located inside the courthouse. Be sure to follow K-State Research and Extension- Greenwood County on Facebook for the most up-to-date information on Extension education programs and the Greenwood County 4-H program.