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 **Extension**  
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# Kindred *Spirits*

## Spread Holiday Cheer, Not Illness

## Be “Egg-stra” Cautious

### Remember the 2-Hour Rule

**Note:** Bacteria can multiply quickly so remember the **2-Hour Rule:** Don't leave perishables out at room temperature for more than 2 hours.

Temperatures for safely cooked meats:

- 140° F** – Fully cooked ham
- 145° F** – Roasts and steaks for medium rare
- 160° F** – Raw pork products
- 165° F** – Whole turkey and chicken

- The **USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline** at: 1-888-674-6854 [mphotline.fsis@usde.gov](mailto:mph hotline.fsis@usde.gov)

- The **U. S. Food and Drug Administration Food Information Line** at : 1-(888) SAFE FOOD

- The **Fight BAC!®** Web site at: [www.fightbac.org](http://www.fightbac.org)

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The holiday season is a special time for celebrating family traditions, many of which include the preparation and enjoyment of food. “Take control of food safety by following a few good food safety practices so no one in the family gets sick,” advises Glenda Kinder, MU Extension nutrition and health education specialist.

For starters, make sure you and your helpers wash your hands often. This is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of bacteria. Add some holiday cheer to the hand washing routine by singing your favorite carol for 20 seconds while you lather up.

Deck the kitchen with two festive-colored cutting boards, one strictly for raw meats and the other for salad ingredients and other non-cooked foods. This will help you avoid cross contamination between raw meat juices and foods that won't be cooked. Never use the same cutting board for both purposes!

Use a meat thermometer to take the guesswork out of cooking that holiday turkey, ham or roast. A meat thermometer is the only reliable way to check the doneness of cooked foods. Clean the food thermometer with hot, soapy water before and after each use.

Many families enjoy making holiday cookies together with lots of sampling going on. The warnings **not** to eat raw cookie dough (and cake batter, etc.) come from the fact that it contains one key ingredient that can lead to illness—raw eggs. Raw eggs may contain salmonella, a bacterium that can be particularly harmful to vulnerable populations such as young children and older adults. When heated to a certain point, the salmonella bacteria are killed. So be be “*Egg-stra*” cautious, when making and serving foods that have raw or undercooked egg. Even grade A eggs with clean, uncracked shells can be contaminated.

Pre-made raw cookie dough that one can buy at the store is safe to eat raw because it either does not contain uncooked eggs or it is made with pasteurized eggs instead. If you really want to sample the raw dough, you could make your favorite holiday cookie safe to eat by using pasteurized eggs. *Egg Beaters*, as well as other packaged egg products found in the dairy case, are pasteurized.

Keep this holiday season safe by using a little common sense and these basic safety techniques.

# Food Can Be the Key

## Simple things can bring joy and comfort

Looking for simple ways to bring comfort and joy to your family now and throughout the year? Lynda Johnson, MU Extension nutrition and health specialist says to consider food as the central ingredient.

- ▶ **Return to rituals.** In today's fast-paced lifestyle, it's easy to forego rituals. However, making family rituals part of everyday meals ties us to memories of the past and hope for the future. Mealtime rituals that bring comfort include prayers, moments of silence, joining of

hands, favorite dishes or special placemats

- ▶ **Cook together.** Preparing food is a soothing way to share time and bring generations together. Talking while you measure, mix or stir can be a comforting time to discuss important issues. Preparing a pot of soup or kneading bread can be therapeutic.
- ▶ **Eat together.** Strengthen your family by making sit-down meals a priority. Small family? Reach out to neighbors, friends, or co-workers and have a contributory dinner. Inviting others to join you for a meal, creates a sense of community.

This is a way to celebrate the meaning and comfort of the holidays.

- ▶ **Turn off the television** during dinner to really experience and enjoy your food. Use meal time for good conversation. Savor your food by focusing on the tastes, smells and textures.
- ▶ **Take time to share.** Cooking together is a gift of your time and attention. This builds self-esteem in children, helps them feel valued and makes "memories." Teach your children to share with those less fortunate by collecting and giving canned goods to local food pantries.

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## Help Kids Cope with Hectic Holidays

Don't let the holiday season leave your family feeling frazzled. Lisa Wallace, MU Extension Human Development Specialist shares these stress-busting tips:

- ◆ **Don't wait for a meltdown.** If your grandchild gets fussy, take a break. Go into a quiet room or divert her attention by singing a holiday carol.
- ◆ **Keep kids involved.** Keep your grandchildren busy by having them help address cards, bake cookies or create a handmade gift.
- ◆ **Set up rules ahead of time.** Before you go anywhere, tell your grandkids what you expect from them.
- ◆ **Keep up routines.** Structure is very important to kids and routines help them handle the excitement of the season.
- ◆ **Do less.** Decide what's really important to you this holiday season and make that your priority. Remember, you cannot do it all. Don't try!