To:   Local News Media  
From: Central Michigan District Health Department  
RE:   Keep Food Safe for the Holidays  
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Keep Food Safe for the Holidays

Keep food safety in mind this holiday season. Keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot.

Tis the season for holiday gatherings of friends and family. Our dear friends and family may include people who are especially vulnerable to foodborne illness – older people, young children, pregnant women, and anyone with a compromised immune system. Keep the season joyous and protect your guests from foodborne illness by following a few simple food safety steps. “The four basic steps of separate, cook, chill, and clean will go a long way to keep your guests safe from an unwelcome foodborne illness,” stated Steve King, Director of Environmental Health Services for Central Michigan District Health Department.

Separate: Keep raw meats separate from cooked foods and vegetables in the refrigerator. It is recommended to store or thaw raw meats in a container on the bottom refrigerator shelf to prevent juices from contaminating foods that will not be cooked. When preparing, keep raw meats separated and use different cutting boards for meats and vegetables.

Cooking: Cook to proper temperatures. Foods are properly cooked when they are heated for a long enough time and at a high enough temperature to kill the harmful microbes that cause foodborne illness. Follow temperature guidelines provided with the food packaging.

Chilling: Refrigerate promptly. Public health officials urge people to refrigerate foods quickly because cold temperatures keep most harmful microbes from growing. Place leftovers in shallow containers, leaving the cover loose to vent steam. Don’t stack the cooling food containers so there is plenty of air circulation. Refrigerators should be set at 40 degrees F and the freezer at 0 degrees F to keep stored food at safe temperatures. Whatever you do, don’t rely on the natural outdoor temperature on the porch to keep foods at proper temperature.
**Clean:** Keep utensils and hands clean. Wash pans, utensils, and cutting boards with hot soapy water after every use and when switching between raw meats and other foods. Clean countertops and sink with hot soapy water before and after food preparation. Wash your hands frequently, especially after handling raw meats, using the bathroom, and before starting food preparation. Frequent handwashing will help protect you and your guests from getting a foodborne illness.

“Keep your friends and family safe by following these food safety steps and have a happy holiday season,” says Director King.

This article has been brought to you by Central Michigan District Health Department, which serves the counties of Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola and Roscommon. Visit our website at [www.cmdhd.org](http://www.cmdhd.org), LIKE Central Michigan District Health Department on Facebook and follow us on Twitter @CMiDHD.

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