

FEATURE – USDA SAYS “BE FOOD SAFE” FOR HOLIDAY BUFFETS

INTRO: The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s “Be Food Safe” message is important during the holiday party season. USDA’s Patrick O’Leary has more. (1:42)

TAG: For a free copy of “Cooking for Groups” write FCIC 604-H Pueblo, CO 81009.

HOSTING A HOLIDAY PARTY REQUIRES GOOD CHEER, BUT ALSO EXPERTISE IN PREPARING FOOD FOR LARGE GROUPS. THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE’S “BE FOOD SAFE” CAMPAIGN CAN HELP PREVENT FOODBORNE ILLNESS FROM RUINING YOUR BUFFET

Kathy Bernard, USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline: It all starts with “Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill.” They’re the four basics of safe food preparation. Clean is washing your hands, cutting surfaces and utensils; Separate raw and cooked foods so you don’t cross contaminate; Cook food thoroughly and check the temperature with a food thermometer – 165 degrees F for poultry and casseroles, 160 degrees F for ground beef; and then chill leftovers within 2 hours.

THE EXPERTS SAY FOR HOLIDAY BUFFETS KEEP HOT FOODS HOT AND COLD FOOD COLD.

Bernard: If you’re transporting cooked food from one location to another, you want to keep it hot by carrying it in an insulated container. If you’re transporting cold foods, use a cooler with ice or a commercial freezing gel, then place it on ice on the buffet. Chafing dishes, warming trays and slow cookers are all fine to keep hot foods hot. But you don’t want to re-heat in them. They’re just for maintaining that reheated temperature. Make sure to heat foods to at least 165 degrees F.

YOU SHOULD ALSO BEWARE OF RAW EGGS: NEVER EAT RAW COOKIE DOUGH AND IF YOU’RE SERVING EGGNOG MADE WITH RAW EGGS, MAKE IT SAFELY FROM A COOKED EGG-MILK MIXTURE, HEATING GENTLY UNTIL IT REACHES 160 DEGREES F ON A FOOD THERMOMETER. OR SERVE PASTUERIZED EGGNOG. FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL THE USDA’S MEAT AND POULTRY HOTLINE AT 1-888-MPHOTLINE, OR ASK A FOOD SAFETY QUESTION AT ASKKAREN.GOV. FOR THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, I’M PAT O’LEARY