1-1-1900

Christmas Dinner

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Holiday Meals—Things To Consider

Rare Roast Beef
Creamed Potatoes
Green Peas
Cranberry Gelatin Salad
Rolls—Butter
Holiday Cookies—Fruitcake

Christmas dinner traditionally brings together families and loved ones.
One favorite family dinner entree is roast beef. Well done, it is usually no food safety problem if served hot and refrigerated after the meal. But rare roast beef, served with pan drippings, is another matter. Here's the perfect spot for bacteria to grow and develop.

If your family must have rare beef, cook it at least to an internal temperature of 140°F. Heat the pan drippings to the boiling point before serving. And don't let the meat stand more than 2 hours at room temperature. Refrigerate leftovers promptly. If gravy or drippings are kept for a second meal, boil them a few minutes before serving.

Creamed vegetables are perishable too. Serve them hot and don't let them stand more than 2 hours at room temperature. Refrigerate quickly after the meal.

Can you prepare and serve the food to avoid foodborne illness? Your family may enjoy meals every day without problems, but on holidays when large groups get together, the types and larger quantities of foods present different problems. You may not have enough refrigerator space.

Bacteria can cause food poisoning. All they need to grow is the right combination of time, temperature, and moisture.

Foodborne illness can cause diarrhea, vomiting, stomach cramps, and other unpleasant symptoms which can last for several hours or even days. With young children and elderly people, the results can be more severe. Often, people mistake foodborne illness for a simple "bug" or virus. The real cause may be food that was not properly handled, prepared, or served. This can be prevented.

Can perishable foods such as cream pies, seafoods, and dishes made with eggs, fish, meat, and poultry be kept COLD (below 40°F)? Do not let these foods stand at room temperature more than 2 hours.

Can perishable foods such as seafood, poultry, and cooked meats be kept HOT (above 140°F)? Bacteria grow best in lukewarm foods. Never let these foods stand at room temperature more than 2 hours.

Holiday meals are fun but need careful planning. How many people can you safely serve? And, how much time will it take to prepare the food? Don't try to feed more people than you can handle. Consider the size and quantity of the cooking equipment you have, your supply of eating utensils and dishes. Figure out how much refrigerator space you'll need to store foods.