



# Food Safety & Nutrition

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## Springtime Food Safety Ideas

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As springtime celebrations approach, we need to remember some food safety tips that will help us stay healthy and enjoy the season. As always, no matter what type of food your celebrations include be sure to follow the four basic food safety principles:

- Wash hands and surfaces often to keep bacteria and germs off the food.
- Don't allow raw foods and ready-to-eat foods to cross contaminate. Use clean cutting boards, utensils and surfaces.
- Cook foods to the safe internal temperatures using a thermometer.
- Cool foods promptly – not letting items sit at room temperature for more than 2 hours.

Eggs are a symbol of spring celebrations. They are used for dyeing and hunting as well as in favorite egg dishes and desserts. Eggs are a perishable food just like raw meat and poultry products. Choose clean, refrigerated and uncracked eggs. Don't leave them unrefrigerated for more than two hours. The two-hour time would include the decorating time, hiding time, hunting time and serving time.

Keep fresh eggs in their original container in the refrigerator for up to 3 weeks. Hard cooked eggs will keep up to 7 days in the refrigerator. This is assuming that after cooking them they were cooled quickly and then stored into refrigerator.

When using hard-boiled eggs for hiding, consider hiding places carefully. Avoid areas where the eggs might come into contact with dirt, pets, wild animals, birds, insects or lawn chemicals.

Ham and lamb are popular meat items of spring events. They can be purchased “ready-to-cook” or “ready-to-eat”. Be sure to check the words carefully and follow the cooking instructions that appear on the back of the package. If the product is “ready-to-cook” the instructions usually include terms such as “cook”, “bake” or “roast”. Ham should be cooked to an internal temperature of 160 °F, lamb to least 145 °F, beef roast to 145 °F and poultry to 180 °F. Be sure to use a thermometer to measure the temperatures.

“Ready-to-eat” foods can be real time-savers when you are strapped for time and expecting a big crowd. “Ready-to-eat” or “fully cooked” means the foods have been cooked and you need only to open the package and serve. If you want to reheat these products heat hams to 140 °F and ribs, roasts and roasted chickens to 165 °F.

When the eating is over, and there is food leftover, be sure to treat it well so it will be safe to eat later in the day or following days. All the food should be refrigerated in shallow containers for rapid cooling. Remember food poisoning bacteria grow rapidly at temperatures above 40 °F. Most leftovers can be kept refrigerated for 3-4 days. When reheating leftovers, use a thermometer be sure all parts of the leftovers reach 165 °F.

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Using the simple food safety rules – keeping hot foods hot and cold foods cold, along with keeping hands and surfaces clean you and your family should have a great springtime celebration.

For more information and food safety questions call WSU Extension at 360-397-6060.

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