

Food Safety Tips for Christmas

To help keep you and your family safe over the festive season, please read the following food safety tips:

- » Avoid keeping food in the temperature danger zone between 5°C and 60°C where food poisoning bacteria grow best. Keep hot foods steaming hot over 60°C and keep cold foods refrigerated at or below 5°C.
- » Ready to eat food should always be defrosted in the fridge or microwave, never on the bench top, unless the manufacturer recommends that you do so.
- » You can defrost the turkey/meats in the fridge, or ask your butcher to defrost it in the coolroom, but make sure it is completely defrosted in the centre before cooking. You can defrost a turkey on the benchtop, but you must make sure it is thoroughly cooked all the way through to make sure any bacteria are killed. Use a meat thermometer to check that the temperature in the thickest part reaches 75°C.
- » Because stuffing slows down cooking and cooling, it is best cooked separately.
- » Before preparing food for Christmas, make sure that there is enough room in the fridge to keep cold food at or less than 5°C. If there is not enough room in the fridge, remember that soft drinks and alcohol, jams, pickles and other acidic condiments do not require refrigeration to remain safe. Keep drinks cold in an esky with ice.
- » Before preparing foods and between handling raw meat or raw chicken wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water and dry thoroughly.
- » Prepare foods as close as possible to eating time.
- » Use separate cutting boards and utensils for raw meats and poultry and ready to eat foods.
- » Cook foods properly. All rolled and stuffed roasts, poultry, sausages, mince dishes and liver need to be fully cooked. Steaks, chops and solid pieces of meat can be eaten rare.
- » If you cook large amounts of food in advance, divide it into smaller portions or shallow containers, cover and place in fridge or freezer. Make sure there is good air circulation around the containers.
- » Refrigerate leftovers within two hours of the meal. Discard if not refrigerated for more than four hours.
- » Always store perishable leftovers in the fridge and use them up within two to three days. When reheating food, ensure that it is steaming hot all the way through (at least 60°C).
- » A Christmas ham will keep for several weeks with proper handling. Remove it from its plastic wrap, cover with clean cloth soaked in water and vinegar so it doesn't dry out, and store it in the fridge below 5°C. Reduced salt hams do not last as long as conventional hams, so follow instructions on the packaging.