

Holiday food safety includes office potlucks plus dinners with families

When it comes to food safety, some things are out of consumer control, such as products contaminated before they reach stores.

But it is more likely that improper food handling, preparation, and storage at home are what lead to food-borne illnesses, especially this time of year, said Oregon Dept. of Agriculture (ODA).

The holiday season is a great time to renew your acquaintance with good and safe food-handling techniques.

“Food safety is an important factor all year around,” said Mike Govro, assistant administrator of ODA’s Food Safety Division. “But during the holiday season,” he said, “a lot of turkeys, hams and specialty foods are cooked in large portions.

“A large number of people are fed. You need to make sure that good, safe food-handling practices are taking place during this time.”

Thawing a whole turkey should not be done on a countertop, but in a refrigerator overnight. It may take several nights for a large turkey to thaw, but it’s better than breeding a batch of bacteria.

“You are going to need to allow at least one day of

thawing for every five pounds of the frozen turkey you are going to purchase,” said Govro. “So you’ll need to make your purchase well enough ahead of time so that you can thaw it out safely.”

In preparing and cooking the turkey, the standard advice starts with clean hands. Always be aware of cross-contamination.

“If you are handling raw foods such as turkey or other meats and are also working with ready-to-eat products such as salad ingredients, make sure the cutting boards you might be placing the produce on haven’t just had a raw turkey or other meat on them,” said Govro.

“Be aware of cross contamination.”

Govro emphasizes the importance of sanitation when preparing a large meal.

“It’s very easy for utensils, knives in particular, to be used for more than one thing,” he said. “It’s also common for several people to help out. Washing hands and utensils is a simple practice that can prevent a potentially serious problem.”

Follow cooking instructions carefully. Make sure the big bird is thoroughly cooked to 165 de-

grees Fahrenheit. If you are using a pop-up thermometer it’s a good idea to use a regular meat thermometer as well. Remember that stuffing inside the turkey will add to the cooking time.

“Some people partially cook the turkey the night before or, in some cases, fully cook it the night before and then put it into the refrigerator,” said Govro. “This can be a dangerous practice.

“If you partially cook a turkey, you might just be starting the bacteria growth and not given enough heat to destroy bacteria. If you completely cook the turkey the night before and put it in a refrigerator, it might take a long time to cool.

“If a whole bird is going to be cooked the night

before, it needs to be cut in small pieces, laid in a shallow pan, and cooled thoroughly the night before.”

Then comes meal time. Food should not be kept out any more than four hours total. The idea is to avoid the danger zone temperature of 40 degrees to 140 degrees F as much as possible.

That’s the temperature range at which bacteria multiplies the fastest.

Rarely is all the food consumed. That means leftovers -- and, once again, good common sense in dealing with the extra food, according to Govro.

“Be aware of how long leftovers are going to be kept before they are finally consumed,” he said. “If you can’t eat the leftover turkey within three days,

put it in a freezer. Gravies should be held for no more than two days without putting them in a freezer.”

Be sure to refrigerate all salads, pumpkin pie, the whipped cream used as toppings, practically everything that was on the table.

Leftovers should only be reheated once and at a minimum of 165 degrees F. Continual reheating is not a good practice because each time the leftover food passes through an optimal bacteria-growing temperature, there can be an explosion of micro-organisms.

Many times, a host will want to send home some leftovers with guests. If your return trip is going to take some time, Govro advises some method of refrigeration. An ice chest

or some kind of container that can keep the food cool is the safest way to bring home the leftovers.

And of course, the motto of ODA’s Food Safety Division is always appropriate when it comes to leftovers: When in doubt, throw it out.

The season of holiday meals is also the season of potlucks and office parties. The same kind of food safety consideration is important.

“Temperature abuse during transportation of the food and during the party or potluck is significant,” said Govro. “Many homes and offices don’t have enough room to store all the food that arrives. So make sure hot food is kept hot and cold food is kept refrigerated.”

IVCDO Success Stories



JEANETTE BOSCH (photo provided)

With this week’s local business success story, the first in a series, Illinois Valley Community Development Organization (IVCDO) wants to feature businesses that are succeeding in their efforts to start or expand their businesses and (gasp!) make a profit.

Jeanette Bosch (owner of the Cave Junction Oregon Liquor Control Commission store) is a proud and happy lady. She is operating a successful and growing small business in Illinois Valley.

As an initial and vital step toward her success, Bosch approached her business in a positive, “can-do” manner, and pursued the tools and knowledge necessary for success. She worked with the IVCDO Revolving Loan Fund to secure capital for her start-up and expansion plans. She also availed herself of the business counseling services available through the IVCDO, at no cost to her. The combined availability of funding *and* business counseling and training is paying off for her in many ways.

“Working in partnership with the IVCDO has helped me considerably,” said Bosch. “I was able to take part in business development support from the IVCDO counselor, which helped me refine my business plan. This effort helped me produce two acceptable Business Loan applications, along with my projected growth ideas.

“With the approved loans, I was able to purchase my business with the initial funds, obtain an updated security system and credit card machine, as well as purchase a Point Of Sale (POS) system with hardware and software, which has improved my profitability and allowed me to expand into the sale of tobacco and gifts items.”

Since its inception in 2000, the IVCDO Small Business Revolving Loan Fund has injected \$280,459 into the valley business community, through a total of 51 loans. Many of these loans help generate the capital needed for a business to start or expand, with concurrent opportunities for hiring local residents as the businesses grow.

“At this time, when the Illinois Valley is ready to experience rapid growth through residential development, there are more opportunities than ever to provide goods and services in the near future, particularly services geared toward the ‘Baby Boomer’ population,” said Bill Moore, business counselor for IVCDO. “We at the IVCDO have the capability of supplying on-site counseling or referrals to our partner organizations for more intensive training and education. All of us are ready, willing and able to help you grow your business.

“If you would like to discuss your business ideas, plans, problems or capital needs, contact the IVCDO offices at 592-4440, or e-mail to billm@ivcdo.org,” said Moore. “Please take advantage of the no-charge business counseling and the Revolving Loan Fund, which is flexibly geared to small business start-ups and expansions. It is our pleasure to serve you.”

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