

## **Holiday Chefs Need Mistake Makeover: ADA Shares New Traditions for Today's Safe Kitchens Bust Kitchen Blunders in 21 Days with FREE Chef Countdown Calendar**

**CHICAGO** (November 21, 2003) — According to a new survey by the American Dietetic Association, nearly half of all Americans will spend more time cooking and baking with their children during the next few weeks than any other time of year, with four out of five saying it's important to pass on holiday cooking traditions. However, some of these traditions may be a recipe for food poisoning.

During the holidays, people who rarely cook any other time of year are suddenly in the kitchen helping prepare traditional holiday meals. Since the holidays are such an important time for families to share lasting memories, it's also a great opportunity for parents to brush up on their home food safety skills and make sure they're passing down these same traditions to their children.

### **Tweak Your Turkey Techniques**

Almost everyone (96 percent) serves turkey or another main meat dish at their holiday dinners – but few are cooking it properly. According to the survey, more than two out of three home cooks do not consistently use a meat thermometer to check the doneness of meats – putting themselves and their guests at risk of food poisoning.

To keep holiday revelers merry, always use a meat thermometer to make sure meats are cooked to a safe internal temperature. Whole turkeys should be cooked to 180 degrees Fahrenheit – check at the innermost part of the turkey thigh. If you're cooking a stuffed turkey, make sure the stuffing reaches 165 degrees Fahrenheit before serving. Holiday hams and pork roasts should be cooked to 160 degrees Fahrenheit, and briskets and beef roasts to at least 145 degrees Fahrenheit.

### **Limit Leftover Lingerings**

According to the ADA survey, leftover food lingers after almost every holiday meal (99 percent), but few feasters take the necessary precautions to safely enjoy foods a second time around. Nearly three out of four Americans admit to eating leftovers cold without reheating them first, a habit that can be particularly dangerous when it comes to gravy – a popular dish that graces nine out of 10 holiday spreads.

Begin a new tradition this holiday season by reheating leftovers to 165 degrees Fahrenheit before eating, and always bring gravy to a steady boil on the stove before serving it the first, second and even third time around. Re-heating gravy in the microwave until hot, as more than half of all home cooks typically do, isn't sufficient to eliminate harmful bacteria.

Nine out of 10 holiday meals fall into the categories of "traditional sit-down" or "buffet-style," and more than half of these festive feasts last longer than two hours – the point at which bacteria begins to multiply rapidly on perishable food items. Along with a main meat dish, families say their typical holiday menu includes pies or desserts made with cream, whipped topping or cream cheese frosting (80 percent); coffee with cream or milk (63 percent); salads made with mayonnaise/dressing (56 percent); and dishes topped with cheese (56 percent).

Keep guests out of harm's way by setting out buffet items in two-hour shifts (about the length of time as two holiday CDs played back-to-back!). After each shift, place uneaten food back in the refrigerator – set at below 40 degrees Fahrenheit – and replenish the buffet or dinner table with fresh holiday favorites.

### **Curb Your Urge to Sample**

For many Americans, sampling food while baking holiday treats is as much a tradition as singing carols or decorating the tree. But most don't know that this dangerous habit can pose a health risk. More than nine out of 10 home cooks confess to licking the batter, eating raw cookie dough or dipping their fingers into uncooked batter to sample – and allowing their children to do the same.

Eating uncooked dough or batter that contains raw eggs — even in small amounts — can lead to salmonella poisoning. As tempting as it may be, curb your urge to sample and wait until baked treats are fully cooked before digging in.

Similar rules apply for homemade favorites such as eggnog and Caesar salad dressing, which nearly half of us make using raw eggs. Keep guests safe by serving only eggnog or Caesar salad dressing made with pasteurized eggs or egg products, to help eliminate the risk of food poisoning. Or, if you're using un-pasteurized eggs, make sure to heat raw egg mixtures to 160 degrees Fahrenheit before serving.

Also make sure you're spreading holiday cheer — not foodborne illnesses — by practicing proper home food safety etiquette when sampling foods on the stove. According to the survey, more than a third of home cooks admit to using the same spoon to both stir and taste gravy or sauce, and of those, nearly three out of four do not wash the spoon before returning it to the saucepan. Help keep bacteria at bay by always washing spoons thoroughly in hot, soapy water between stirring and tasting.

### **Cookie Rookie Pledge**

Resisting the urge to sneak a bite of raw cookie dough can be virtually impossible — especially for the little ones. This year, encourage kids to take the "Cookie Rookie Pledge" before helping with holiday baking, and reward them for curbing their cookie dough craving with an official "Cookie Rookie Certificate of Achievement." **Click here** to download a printer-friendly version today!

With approximately 65,000 members, the American Dietetic Association is the nation's largest organization of food and nutrition professionals. ADA serves the public by promoting optimal nutrition, health and well-being. To locate a registered dietitian in your area, visit the American Dietetic Association at [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org).

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*Source: Impulse Research Corporation Survey, October 2003.*

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