

## News Release

Faye Malek, Family Living Educator  
Manitowoc County UW-Extension  
P.O. Box 1150, 4319 Expo Drive  
Manitowoc, WI 54221-1150

December 25, 2005

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### Serving a holiday buffet with food safety in mind

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Many of us have seen the situation: the guests arrive later in the day, but the refrigerator is already bursting with platters of meat, cheese, and other party treats. Can the eggnog sit out on the counter for a few extra hours? What about cream-filled cakes or pies? What is the best way to keep holiday buffet foods safe so that guests don't end up with an unwanted illness? Barbara Ingham, University of Wisconsin-Extension food scientist, offers these tips from the USDA:

**Size Matters!** If you are planning to serve a buffet at home and you aren't sure how quickly the food will be eaten, keep the buffet portions small. Store cold back-up dishes in the refrigerator and keep hot dishes in the oven (set at 200° to 250°F) prior to serving.

**Take Temperatures!** Cooked hot foods should be kept at 140°F or warmer. Use a food thermometer to check. Serve or keep food hot in chafing dishes, crock pots, and warming trays. Note: Crock pots should not be used to re-heat foods, however, a preheated crock pot can be used to safely hold warm or hot food.

**Chill Out!** Keep cold foods at 40°F or colder. Keep cold foods refrigerated until serving time. If a food is going to stay out on the buffet table longer than two hours, place plates of cold food on ice to retain the chill. Eggnog, cream-filled cakes and pies and other perishable items must be kept cold to remain safe. If you run out of refrigerator room, ask a friend or neighbor if you can store food in their refrigerator until the big event.

**Keep it Fresh!** It is unsafe to add new food to a serving dish that already contains foods. Many people's hands may have touched the food, and the food has been at room temperature for awhile. Instead, replace empty or nearly empty platters with freshly filled ones.

**Watch the Clock!** Remember the Two-Hour Rule: Don't leave perishable food out at room temperature on a buffet table for more than two hours unless you are keeping the food cold or hot.

More importantly, enjoy the holidays and the treats of the season!

If you have any questions or concerns about food safety, contact me at 683-4171 or visit our office website for food safety tips at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/manitowoc/>

Here are some other options:

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Meat and Poultry Hotline at (800) 535-4555 or TTY (800) 256-7072.
- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration Food Information Line at (888) SAFE FOOD
- The Fight BAC!® website at: [www.fightbac.org](http://www.fightbac.org)

I hope you have a safe and enjoyable holiday season.

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