



# News Release

**For immediate release:** November 26, 2013

(13-161)

Contacts: [Marqise Allen](#), Communications Office  
[Kelly Stowe](#), Communications Office

360-236-4072

360-236-4022

## **Holiday traditions highlight safety and risks of food and drinks**

*Cooks can ensure that holiday meals and food gifts spread good cheers; not germs*

**OLYMPIA** — 'Tis the season of treasured traditions, many of which involve special recipes and family feasts. As the holiday season approaches, the state Department of Health reminds cooks that every chef has an important role in preventing food-borne illnesses, whatever's on the menu.

“This time of year can be hectic, but food safety guidelines are simple and very important in helping keep the holidays healthy,” said Dave Gifford, manager of the Food Safety Program.

“We have four basic principles – clean, separate, cook, and chill. Most food-related illnesses can be prevented when these steps are followed.”

From proper cooking temperatures for Thanksgiving Day turkey to home canning safety, holiday cooks can keep it safe by [watching a short video](#) on the agency's Holiday Food Safety page.

Turkey is frequently served at holiday gatherings but can be difficult to properly cook. Use a food thermometer to make sure turkey is cooked to at least 165 °F. Check the internal temperature in the innermost part of the thigh and wing and the thickest part of the breast. More advice about safely roasting a turkey is on the USDA's [Let's Talk Turkey](#) website.

Keeping food at the right temperature is important when going to a holiday party. Remember to keep hot foods hot (140° F or higher). Wrap dishes in foil, cover them in heavy towels, or put them in insulated containers designed to keep food hot. Keep cold foods cold: put them in a cooler with ice or freezer packs, or use an insulated container with a cold pack so they remain at 40° F or lower, especially if traveling for more than half an hour. Be sure to put cold foods in the refrigerator and hot foods in a warm oven when you arrive.

Always wash your hands before preparing and packaging gifts of goodies. This is especially important for ready-to-eat items like fudge or cookies. Some germs, like norovirus, can remain on food for days.

You can more safely share the gift of home-canned jams, jellies, and pickled foods by using tactics to reduce the chances of botulism food poisoning in low acid foods. Washington only has a few botulism cases a year, but the disease can be deadly. Follow [the USDA Guide to Home Canning](#) to be sure you're canning safely.

Gift-giving offers an opportunity to promote food safety. A [food thermometer \(see video\)](#), insulated carrying case, or a new cutting board can help keep bacteria at bay and serve as a great gift that can be used year-round.

The [Department of Health website](#) ([www.doh.wa.gov](http://www.doh.wa.gov)) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

###