

# Holiday Potluck Food Safety

## *Why are we concerned about keeping potluck meals safe?*

Potlucks are a great way to share recipes and are popular during the holidays. Preparing foods safely keeps potlucks fun by reducing the risk of foodborne illness.

## *How can I make sure the food I bring to a potluck is safe?*

- **Thaw frozen foods safely** - The best way to thaw food is in the refrigerator, under cold running water, or in the microwave.
- **Keep clean during preparation** - Use warm, soapy water to wash hands before preparing food, after handling raw meat or eggs, sneezing/coughing, using the bathroom, changing diapers, or handling pets. Clean surfaces with hot, soapy water. Use separate utensils and plates when handling and preparing raw meat or eggs.
- **Cook meats thoroughly** - Use a meat thermometer to ensure pork is cooked to at least 145<sup>0</sup>F (degrees Fahrenheit), red meats to at least 160<sup>0</sup>F, and poultry to 165<sup>0</sup>F. Never partially cook raw meats to warm later.
- **Transport foods safely**—Use ice packs to keep cold foods at or below 40<sup>0</sup>F. If you cook a casserole at home, take it straight from the oven and either place it in an insulated bag or wrap it in several layers of foil followed by newspaper and a towel. If you can't serve it as soon as you arrive, return it to the oven.
- **Serve it safely** - Always serve with clean utensils. Never leave perishable food out of the refrigerator for more than 2 hours. Keep cold foods cold (keep on ice) and hot foods hot (use warming trays or a crockpot) when serving.



*For more information go to:* [www.foodsafety.gov](http://www.foodsafety.gov)



12/13



You can find this and other timely public health tips and events on the Thomas Jefferson Health District (TJHD) Facebook page. Check us out and “like us!”

Follow us on  
Facebook



**VDH** VIRGINIA  
DEPARTMENT  
OF HEALTH  
*Protecting You and Your Environment*