

# Being food safe this Christmas

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Food safety is more or less common sense, but it can be easy to forget the basics over the “silly season”. You can reduce the chances of getting sick from what you eat with a little bit of planning.

**Remember:** Always wash and dry your hands thoroughly before handling any food and after preparing raw meats.

## Don't overload your fridge

It can be a challenge to plan food storage when fridge space is at a premium during the festive season.

Plan your menu, write a shopping list and try not to over cater. Supermarkets are only closed for one day!

Alternatives to fridge space can include:

- Putting the beer, wine and juice into a chilly bin or a bath or tub loaded with ice.
- Putting all vegetables and fruit that don't need to be stored in the fridge in a cool, dry place.

## Dealing with Christmas food

Below are some helpful tips for Christmas dinner, whether it is a traditional one or a kiwi BBQ.

### Hams

- Store hams in the fridge covered with a clean damp tea towel that is changed daily.
- Eat within two weeks of opening.
- Freeze some of your ham in clean freezer bags if you don't think you can consume it all within the given time periods.
- Eat sliced ham within three to five days and always handle the ham with clean hands and utensils.

### Turkey

- Take the turkey out of the freezer four days before Christmas Day. Defrost in the bottom of the fridge (below all ready to eat foods), and in a leak proof container.
- Cook turkey thoroughly as per instructions on packaging. Juices should run clear when checked with a skewer and flesh should not be pink.
- Chopping boards used for preparing the turkey need to be scrubbed with hot soapy water before being used for other foods.



### *Other meats*

- Large chickens or other meat cuts (such as legs of lamb) if frozen will need two days to thaw thoroughly in the fridge. Place in leak proof containers below any ready to eat foods).
- Cook meat immediately afterwards if using a microwave to thaw. The microwave tends to warm up foods which starts any bacteria present growing, cooking thoroughly destroys the bacteria.
- Cook following instructions for the weight of cut/bird. Check with a skewer that all meat juices run clear before serving.

### *BBQs*

Store and marinade meats in one container. Serve cooked meats on clean plates.

### *Salads*

- Salads with meats, seafood or eggs or creamy dressings will need to be stored in the fridge.
- Green leafy salads: Wash and dry all produce well before preparing.
- Wait until serving before putting any creamy dressings on.

### *Desserts*

- Pavlova does not need to be refrigerated until it has cream on it so do this just prior to serving.
- Prepare any desserts that can be frozen and store them in the freezer.
- Purchase cream and milk the day before Christmas Day.

### *Picnics*

- Take hand sanitiser with you.
- Use chilly bins with ice to keep food safe.
- Have covers for food to keep flies off (and help keep wasps away).

## **Watch out with Christmas leftovers**

- Cover and refrigerate leftovers quickly. Two hours at room temperature is a safe guide.
- Reheat leftovers until steaming hot. Do not reheat more than once.
- Use leftovers within two to three days.
- Get visitors to take some leftovers home with them.
- Freeze suitable foods for later use. Cooked meats and some desserts will freeze well.
- Remember the 3C's of food hygiene – clean, cook, chill.



## **Don't cook for others if you are unwell**

Some “stomach bugs” are highly infectious. So family members with vomiting and diarrhoea should stay at home rather than spread the bug to your wider family. The elderly and the very young are very vulnerable.

Wait 48 hours till after symptoms have gone before getting out and about again.