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Planning Successful Holiday Meals



Planning ahead can make holidays easier and less stressful.

Invite guests, asking everyone to RSVP so you know how much food to prepare. Find out if your guests have special dietary requirements.

Plan the menu and recipes. Select a few recipes that serve well at room temperature. Calculate the cooking time and temperatures (plus cooking order).

Prepare three shopping lists: one for food prep safety items, one for perishable food and one for non-perishables.

Hardy vegetables such as onions, car-

rots and potatoes can be purchased one week ahead, while, salad greens and perishable vegetables should not be purchased until the day before.

Wash, trim and cut fresh vegetables on a clean cutting board. Wash leafy greens, spin, dry, and store by packing in paper towels in a sealable plastic bag in the refrigerator for no longer than one day.

Chill the beverages in a cooler filled with ice.

Check to make sure your food thermometer is in working order and calibrated. Use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature of meat.

Divide all leftovers into smaller portions and store in shallow containers in the refrigerator within two hours.

Source: www.holidayfoodsafety.org/

The Chemistry of Pumpkin Spice Flavor

Pumpkin spice is everywhere from coffee to body butter. But don't expect any real pumpkin.

Pumpkin spice products suggest traditional pumpkin pie. The spices cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, clove or allspice are what

gives pumpkin its flavor. But natural spices are difficult to replicate for flavor consistency.

The traditional spice mixture contains about 340 flavor compounds such as eugenol for cloves, terpenes for nutmeg, and

zingiberene for ginger. Maillard reaction products caramelize the mixture into a tasty food product.

Thus, the complex world of flavor chemistry gives you the latest food craze.

Source: <http://cen.acs.org/articles/92/143/Pumpkin-Spice-Flavor.html>

Keeping Food from Animals Safe

If you eat meat or drink milk, you may want to know: Are there trace amounts of the veterinary drugs used in food-producing animals entering your diet? And if so, are the amounts safe for human consumption?

The FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine works to validate methods for testing trace

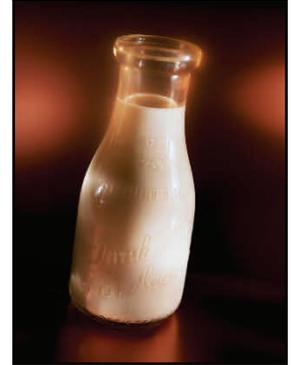
amounts of drugs in foods from animals. They also work to develop newer and better testing methods.

Dairy cattle are tested for beta-lactam antibiotics with rapid-screening tests. These tests give on the spot results.

For meat, poultry, and eggs, tests are done for

trace amounts of penicillin or other antibiotics. New testing methods show if multiple drugs are present and amount of each.

Animal feeds are also tested for mycotoxins and other contaminants. Poor growing methods and improper storage conditions can lead to poor feed for animals.



Learn more at www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm419383.htm

Learn more about preserving nuts at <http://bit.ly/1xqre2Z>



Preserving Nuts

Nuts store very well by properly drying and storing in air-tight containers in a cool location. Refrigerated (at 32-45°F) nuts will maintain quality for one year and frozen (at 0°F) nuts will maintain quality for 1, 2, or even

3 years depending on the type of nut. The University of California has more specific information about [harvesting and storing different types of nuts](#).

It is no longer recommended to can dry nuts.

This is due to risk of condensation from the canning process leading to bacterial growth. A better option is to vacuum pack dry, shelled nuts.

The Safety of Commercial Pumpkin Pie

Pumpkin pie is considered a potentially hazardous food. But commercially baked pumpkin pie can be left at room temperature. Commercial operations must follow FDA protocols to demonstrate the safety of the pie.

The protocols include using Good Manufacturing Practices; baking the pie to an internal temperature of 180°F at the coolest point; cooling and packaging to prevent post-bake contamination; performing microbial testing to verify it is microbiologically stable without refrigeration; and then labeling for best shelf life.

For the home baker, homemade pumpkin pie should be stored in the refrigerator after it cools to ensure its safety.

Source: www.fda.gov/Food/FoodScienceResearch/SafePracticesforFoodProcesses/ucm094195.htm



Photo: USDA/ARS

Maximize Nutrition with Steaming



Steaming can help save nutrients in food. Other benefits include no added fat, no carcinogen formation from charring, and minimal, if any, nutrient loss.

The latest evidence of steaming's benefit comes from the University of Illinois. They studied broccoli and different cooking methods. Steam cooking helped retain myrosinase to form sulforaphane, a cancer-fighting enzyme. Boiling and microwaving destroyed this enzyme. Steaming also reduces the loss of water soluble vitamins such as vitamins A, D, E, K, and carotenoids.

While broccoli is commonly studied, other vegetables such as cauliflower, artichoke hearts, asparagus, beets and corn on the cob can be cooked by steaming. After cooking, toss vegetables in a little oil to help your body benefit from fat-soluble nutrients.

Instead of plain water, add herbs, spices or aromatic ingredients to boost flavor. Replacing water with broth can also improve flavor.

Source: Tufts Health & Nutrition Letter, October 2014



New App for Restaurant Health Inspections

Before going to a restaurant, check the [HDScores](#) app to see how they rated on their health inspections.

This new app for iPhones can show inspections

within the last 12-24 hours of the health department's filing. It shows your area and the percentage score for the restaurant. The app focuses on cleanliness and foodborne illness factors.

Currently, information is available from the state of Kansas, some other states, and major cities such as Seattle, Chicago, and San Francisco. An Android version is coming soon.

For more information, see
<http://bit.ly/1v0GYf5>
and
<http://bit.ly/1u7xBrX>



For more tips on freezing baked goods, see <http://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/uga/FreezingPreparedFoods.pdf>

Freezing Pie and Pastry

Save time during the holidays by preparing pie pastry ahead and freezing for later use.

For unbaked crust, make the recipe and fit into pie pans. Place in a freezer bag for freezer storage. Or, store flat rounds of dough on freezer paper lined pieces of cardboard. Stack in freezer bags for storage.

For baked crust, make and bake as usual. Cool completely and package for freezer storage.

Nut pies, such as pecan, freeze well. Make as usual. Cool rapidly. Freeze before packaging. Let stand at room temperature 15 minutes. Then heat in a 350°F oven about 30 minutes or until warm.

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Storing Canning Supplies



Canning equipment can last for years with proper care and maintenance.

With frost on the pumpkin, many home food preservers are storing canning equipment until spring. Take time now to maintain your equipment. You will be glad you did next year when you see those first signs of vegetables in the garden and fruits beginning to ripen.

- Pressure canners—clean the vent and safety valve. Remove

the gasket. Clean well and check for wear and cracks. Buy replacement parts if needed.

- Clean darkened surfaces of aluminum canners by boiling a mixture of 1 tablespoon cream of tartar and 1 gallon of water.
- Store canners with crumpled paper towels or newspaper to absorb moisture. Place lids upside down for air circulation.
- Examine empty jars for damage. Wash and dry jars and rings completely before storing.

For more tips, see http://nchfp.uga.edu/tips/fall/store_canning_supplies.html



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On the Web at
www.rrc.ksu.edu



Dishwasher Safety Tips

An automatic dishwasher can save time. Here are some tips for best use from the American Cleaning Institute®.

1. Place sharp items point end down.
2. Place glassware to prevent breakage and rattling.



3. Avoid overloading for best cleaning.
4. Let the machine cool before unloading.
5. Close the door after loading or unloading.

6. Use a child safety lock if small children are present.
7. Store detergent out of the reach of pets and kids.
8. Follow detergent instructions for best use.
9. Don't mix detergent with other cleaning products.
10. Keep detergent in original container. Do not reuse the container.
11. Avoid direct contact of gel detergent and skin or clothes.