

April: Spring Celebrations

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It's spring - the season to enjoy the great outdoors and celebrate special occasions, like Easter, Passover, and graduation! As celebrations and events approach, take a fresh look at food safety



habits. The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Meat and Poultry Hotline gets extra busy this time of year with food safety

questions. The hotline has lots of advices to keep celebrations safe from foodborne hazards. Check out these spring food safety tips.

Food safety tips for spring celebrations:

How long can I keep a ham in the refrigerator before cooking it?

- The answer depends on the type of ham and how it's packaged. *The label is the best guide for determining storage time.* It gives the product name, whether it's smoked or cured, and whether you must refrigerate it. While USDA doesn't require manufacturers to list the freshness date on products, many do.
- Look for the instructions on the label that tell you how long you can keep the product. For example: "Best if used by April 15." Leftover cooked ham should be stored in the refrigerator at 40 degrees Fahrenheit (F) or below and *used within 3-4 days or frozen.*
- Check out the safe food storage website from UNL Extension at <http://food.unl.edu/safety/storage>.

What is the best way to safely handle eggs used for an Easter egg hunt?

- Only use eggs that have been refrigerated, and discard eggs that are cracked or dirty. When decorating, use food-grade dyes. It's safe to use commercial egg dyes, liquid food coloring, and fruit-drink powders.

- When handling eggs, be careful not to crack them. Keep eggs refrigerated until hiding time. The "found" Easter eggs must be washed, re-refrigerated and eaten within 7 days of cooking. Hard-cooked eggs that have been lying on the ground should not be used because they can pick up bacteria, especially if the shells are cracked. Then bacteria can contaminate the inside.
- Eggs should be hidden in places protected from dirt, moisture, pets, and other sources of bacteria. The total time for hiding and hunting eggs should not exceed 2 hours, or 1 hour if the air temperature outside is above 90 degrees F. If eggs are left out of the refrigerator for more than two hours, bacteria could multiply to dangerous levels and cause food poisoning.

I've heard you shouldn't let food sit out. How can I host and serve a safe meal?

- Serve cold foods straight from the refrigerator. Keep them cold by nesting dishes in beds of ice or use a series of small serving trays and replace them often.
- Fully cook and slice the brisket before the celebration begins. Then either reheat it in the microwave while serving the appetizer, or leave the foil-covered brisket, kept moist with gravy, in a warming oven (about 200 degrees F) until serving time.
- Discard food that has been left out at room temperature more than two hours (one hour when the temperature is above 90 degrees F).

Remember to keep it clean.

- Always wash hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds before and after food handling. Beware of cross-contamination.
- Foodborne illness can occur when kitchen equipment is not thoroughly washed between uses. Always wash food contact surfaces and cooking equipment, including blenders, in hot water and soap.

For more food, nutrition, and health information go to food.unl.edu or scan the QR code with your smart phone or other electronic device and go



directly to the website. If you have other food safety questions contact the Hotline (1-888-674-6854 toll-free) or online at AskKaren.gov. Have a safe and happy spring celebration!

Additional Resources & Links:

- **Recipe Central** - Enjoy healthy cooking from your own kitchen. Use recipes from our collections to get started!
<http://food.unl.edu/web/fnh/recipe-central>
- **UNL Extension Calendar** – National Food Days, Weeks, and Months for April.
<http://food.unl.edu/web/fnh/april>
- **Spring Traditions: Serving Ham Safely** - If you've been shopping for ham recently, you may have found yourself bewildered by the many choices available. Here are some tips to make it easier for you to prepare ham successfully – and safely.
<http://www.foodsafety.gov/blog/ham.html>
- **Spring Traditions: Serving Brisket Safely** - Brisket is a popular meat for springtime celebrations. Follow these guidelines from USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline to prepare a delicious, yet safe brisket meal for your family and friends.
<http://www.foodsafety.gov/blog/brisket.html>
- **Safely Preparing Corned Beef Brisket in a Slow Cooker** – Check out this video from USDA Food Safety on safely preparing corned beef brisket in a slow cooker.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6bv6fOq_CbI&list=UUz3Frdx1oZsjukf6yN63G4w&feature=plcp



- **Cracking the Date Code on Egg Cartons** - Is there a way to tell from the egg carton how old the eggs are? Are there some guidelines for how long eggs are safe to eat? Check out these tips.
<http://food.unl.edu/safety/cracking-code-egg>
- **Cook Eggs Thoroughly and Keep Refrigerated to Avoid Salmonella** - University of Nebraska-Lincoln food safety specialist says that eggs -- like meat, poultry, milk and other foods -- are safe when handled properly.
<http://food.unl.edu/cook-eggs>
- **Eggs and Egg Products** - Eggs are one of nature's most nutritious and economical foods. But, you must take special care with handling and preparing fresh eggs and egg products to avoid food poisoning.
<http://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/types/eggs/>
- **Holiday Food Safety Tips from Food Safety.gov** - This handout goes over basic food safety concepts such as Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill.
http://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/events/holidays/check_steps.pdf

Sources:

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