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### Keep the Goodies Safe!

You know the piles of food that show up for the holiday parties, the Christmas dinner, the football marathons. It is never all eaten at one sitting. So, plan now how you are going to keep those leftovers safe!

Foods with meat, milk and eggs *must* go in the refrigerator. These include not only the leftover turkey, but the gravy *and* the pumpkin pie! If you don't have enough refrigerator space, get extra ice and keep some coolers handy in the kitchen. As soon as dinner is over, get the food put away. The safe time limit is 2 hours at room temperature. The less time it sits warm, the fewer bacteria will have a chance to grow.

Freeze meat in meal-sized packages, so you can thaw just what you'll need. Frozen cooked turkey will still be top quality for at least 4 months. Ham, because of the salt and fat it contains, will only be really good for 1 to 2 months. It is not recommended that stuffing be frozen. If you can't eat it all by tomorrow, it's best to throw the leftovers away. You can freeze leftover gravy, but depending on how it was made, it might separate or curdle when you thaw it.

Most vegetable casseroles, including sweet potatoes, can be frozen. However, those with a creamy sauce might be watery and separated when they are thawed. You'll be able to drain off the juice and add fresh sauce. It will be safe, just not pretty. But safe is much better than sick if it was left in the refrigerator too long.

If you know there are always several pies left over, only make one this year. Spread the good smells out over several weeks. Make the pumpkin pie for Christmas, the sweet potato pie for New Year's, and the mince for the football bowl games. Don't

make the next until the first one is finished.

Breads, rolls, cookies, cakes and pastries without cream filling are the ones that can safely sit on the counter. You might want to try a pumpkin bread or sweet potato rolls instead of pies, to save on refrigerator space. It will be sweet, and safe besides.

Have Happy and Peaceful Holidays!

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