

## **PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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### Keep Easter Happy

Whether they go to sunrise service or not, many families often celebrate Easter with a big family gathering. And that of course means food, usually lots of it. Good food, home cooked food, a big baked ham, sweet potatoes, and colored eggs for the children's baskets are all on the table. Being on the table for a short time is okay, to serve during the meal. But with the warming weather (it was in the 90's last month all ready!), the table is not the place to leave any of that. No one wants to end their celebration in the bathroom, or hospital!

Start with children's delight - the Easter eggs. They're the symbol you've been seeing all over the stores, in every color of the rainbow. Just remember, eggs will spoil. Hard cooked eggs actually spoil faster than raw eggs. The heat of boiling an egg destroys its natural defense system. So boiled eggs should only be out of the refrigerator for 2 HOURS MAX. If you color eggs, refrigerate them as soon as possible. Give each child a plate or half an egg carton with their name on it. Let them store their eggs in the refrigerator and select from there.

What about the ham, doesn't it have a lot of salt? Yes, hams have a lot of salt, more than enough to raise our blood pressure. But hams today are not like the ones our grandparents kept hanging in the attic. Hams today have a lot more moisture and less salt than the old country hams did. More hams today are also sugar-cured, or at least have a lot more sugar in the curing mix. More water, more sugar, less salt, all add up to hams that will let more bacteria grow. Keep the ham cold, on ice until it goes into the oven. Then as soon as dinner is served, stick the ham back in the 'fridge.

Unfortunately one of the bacteria that likes to grow on salty ham is *Staphylococcus*. This bug is sneaky. It gives no sign that it's there, but while it's growing it makes a toxin. If we reheat a slice of ham we might kill all the bacteria. But that toxin will still be there. And when it hits our intestines, the effect is not pretty. This is one of those food poisonings where you almost wish you were dead, because you are losing it out of both ends. Thank goodness, within a day or two you've managed to get rid of the toxin, and you start to feel like you'll survive. But for small children or for frail adults it can be especially dangerous. If they lose enough liquid and dehydrate they can be seriously,

seriously ill. Keep that leftover ham in the refrigerator!

What about dessert? A tall layer cake, covered in fluffy frosting, maybe some toasted coconut on top, that's some families' idea of Easter dessert. Yum! But if that cake has a traditional cream filling, it better be refrigerated too. Any dessert that has a moist cream, milk or egg-based filling must be kept cold. Milk and eggs have protein and moisture. Add some sugar and it's a feast for bacteria.

Desserts that are dry, such as cookies, or have just a fruit filling, such as peach pie, can generally be safely left on the counter or table. Cakes that are simply frosted, or have frosting between the layers, can be left a room temperature. But remember, if they last long enough that you see even a spot of mold, pitch them. Molds that grow on baked goods, and sweets such as jams and jellies, can produce toxins too. Their toxins don't work as fast as *Staph* toxins do, but they can cause cancer. Don't take a chance, throw moldy foods away.

Other foods that need to be kept refrigerated include the cooked vegetable side dishes, and any cut fruit. Once a fruit is sliced, diced, peeled or otherwise cut open its nice sweet juices are the local buffet for bacteria. They must be kept cold to be safe.

Here's a recipe you need to keep handy for a last minute dessert. It can cook while you're eating dinner, to be served warm and delicious. Have a wonderful Easter!

#### Last Minute Blueberry Dessert

1 (21 oz) can blueberry pie filling	1 (25 oz) jar applesauce
1 (9 oz) package yellow cake mix	½ cup chopped pecans or almonds
2 tsp ground cinnamon	¼ cup (½ stick) margarine

Mix pie filling and applesauce in round, 3 qt microwave-safe dish. Sprinkle cake mix, nuts and cinnamon over top. Melt margarine and drizzle over top. Microwave on High for 12 to 15 minutes. Let stand for 30 minutes before serving. Can be served with ice cream or vanilla yogurt. Serves 8.

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