



13 December 2013

FDA ADVISORY

No. **2013 064**

SUBJECT: FOOD SAFETY TIPS ON CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS

The Philippines has the longest celebration of the Christmas Season in the world. It is celebrated with shopping, gift-giving, and dining. As a Catholic country, it officially ends on the first Sunday of January during the Feast of the Three Kings. Again, it ends with a feast.

Food-borne diseases can ruin family Christmas celebrations and reunions. Food-borne illness is preventable.

Here are some food safety tips during the holidays of food, drink and merriment:

1. Do your mall and shopping first before buying any grocery goods and perishable items, like fresh meat, fish, fruits and vegetables. There is less chance that these perishable items will spoil due to growth and colonization of bacteria. In an ideal environment, a bacterium divides into two every 20 minutes. If there is one bacterium in a fresh meat at 6:00 AM, that one bacterium would have multiplied into around 134,000,000 bacteria by 9:00 PM. This is just for one bacterium.
2. Place your perishable grocery items separate from pre-packaged goods. Keep perishable items in a cooler place inside your car. Cool temperature retards bacterial growth.
3. Put meat in the freezers to avoid food spoilage caused by bacteria. Avoid blood from dripping all over the kitchen. Blood are good media for bacteria to grow. It is best to wrap your meat in containers or plastic bags.
4. Store meat in containers or plastic bags in quantity enough for one meal. Running water to thaw frozen meat may contaminate the meat and destroy its quality. The best way to thaw frozen meat and fish should be by removing them from the freezer or chiller and transferring them inside the refrigerator overnight.
5. Wash all fruits and vegetables before putting them in the refrigerator so that they do not become sources of contamination for other food in the refrigerator. Fruits and vegetables are sometimes sprayed with chemicals or exposed to soil and fecal contaminants while in transit or being handled. This is to avoid cross-contamination.
6. Always wash your hands before handling food. Be sure to use soap and liberal amount of water. Dry your hands using clean cloth.





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7. Always wash your hands when feeding infants or assisting children when they eat.
8. Never place spoonful of hot food in your mouth before giving them to infants and children.
9. Always require children to wash their hands before eating, especially after handling pet animals or playing.
10. Serving sizes on the table should be just enough for the family to prevent food from unnecessary contamination. Keeping smaller serving dishes and trays maintains hot food hot and cold food cold as you keep on refilling them. As a general rule, never leave food in the open for more than two hours.
11. Use only cooking and serving utensils that are clean. Use separate cutting boards and utensils to prepare raw meats and poultry as these may harbour bacteria.
12. Properly dispose all food wastes away from both human and animal scavengers.
13. When offered to bring home food items from a party, make sure that you go straight home. Otherwise, spoilage of food may set in within 2 hours.
14. If in doubt about the safety of a food item, throw it out. Do not give it away nor feed it to your pet animals.
15. Remember to consult your doctor when you suspect food-borne illnesses.

Remember that food-borne illnesses is preventable.

For inquiries and more information, kindly email us at info@fda.gov.ph.


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