

2002

# How Can I Keep My Holiday Food Safe From Salmonella?

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## Recommended Citation

Brennand, Charlotte, "How Can I Keep My Holiday Food Safe From Salmonella?" (2002). *All Archived Publications*. Paper 318.  
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**A weekly question/answer column**

**How Can I Keep My Holiday Food Safe From Salmonella?**

*Charlotte Brennand\* answers:*

Holiday parties are popular, but salmonella isn't. Here are some tips to keep this nasty pathogen from being a guest at your party.

- Be sure to keep eggs refrigerated and only buy eggs that are in refrigerated cases. Eggs that are well cooked are safe. Any food made with lightly cooked eggs should be served immediately or chilled at once to serve cold. Food items with raw eggs in them such as raw cookie dough come with a risk factor.
- Commercially made eggnog uses pasteurized eggs and so is not a source of salmonella. However, homemade eggnog can be risky. It can be made safely by combining the eggs with the milk or cream and either heating to 140 degrees and holding it at that temperature for 3 ½ minutes or heating it to 160 degrees with no holding time. An alternative is to use eggs sold in refrigerated cartons as low cholesterol products. These are basically pasteurized egg whites.
- Gingerbread houses are often made with royal icing that contains raw egg whites. If the gingerbread house is to be eaten, the safest alternative is to make a frosting without raw egg whites. Salmonella will not grow in the frosting, but bacteria present in the egg may still be alive. Although the risk is relatively low, it is best for immune-compromised people not to eat royal icing made using fresh egg whites. Dried egg whites are a safe option since they have been pasteurized.
- Stirred custard is safe from salmonella once it is thick enough to coat a spoon, and baked custard is safe once it is set.

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\* Charlotte Brennand is Utah State University Extension Food Safety Specialist