



Have You Heard?

By Doris Thomas
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Home Economist

Avoid An Uninvited Party Guest

It seemed like a perfect party. Uncle Bob did not bore everyone with his war stories and even your weight-conscious sister-in-law had a second helping of your soufflé. They why do you not feel well this morning?

It could be that an uninvited guest was at your party last night — salmonella bacteria. Although it's seldom a problem when food is handled and cooked properly, when it's not, it may cause illness. While rarely fatal for healthy people, salmonellosis can cause nausea, vomiting, cramps, diarrhea, and feverishness. Symptoms generally develop 12 to 72 hours after eating contaminated food.

For pregnant women, young children, older people, and anyone taking antibiotics, the risk is even greater. Other at risk groups include organ recipients and those with a chronic disease such as cancer or AIDS because their immune systems are weakened.

Although food-borne illnesses are more common than you might think, they can be prevented.

Preventing of salmonellosis starts at the grocery store. Never buy anything you will not be able to use or freeze before the expiration date or any food that is in poor condition.

Put all perishable foods away, as soon as you arrive home from the store. Raw meats, fish, or chicken may drip, so be sure to place these packages on a plate before storing in the refrigerator.

Set your refrigerator at 40 degrees F (or lower), your freezer at 0 degrees F. Generally speaking, your refrigerator should be as cold as possible without freezing your milk or salad greens.

To keep bacteria in check, thaw

frozen foods in the microwave or refrigerator never on the kitchen counter. Always marinate chicken and meats in the refrigerator.

When preparing food, keep everything clean from your hands to your cutting board and knife. Always wash your cutting board well in hot, soapy water after using it to cut up raw meats. Bacteria can live in dish towels and cloths, too, so be sure to wash them often. Replace sponges every few weeks.

A leading cause of salmonellosis is undercooked food, especially meats, so be sure to cook thorough, and don't taste for seasoning before food is done. Red meat is cooked when it is brown or gray inside. Fish flakes with a fork. Poultry juices run clear.

Or use a meat thermometer to determine internal temperature. Meat should be cooked to 160 to 170 degrees F, poultry to 185 degrees F, and any cooked combination food to 160 degrees F.

Eggs also can be a problem if not cooked properly. The yolk and white should be firm, not runny. Avoid any recipe in which eggs remain raw or only partially cooked such as Hollandaise sauce and some eggnog recipes.

Always use clean dishes and utensils to serve food, not those used in preparation. Keep party food on ice or serve from platters in the refrigerator throughout the gathering.

The bacteria that causes food poisoning grow rapidly at warm temperatures, so be sure to refrigerate perishable foods as soon as possible after serving and always within two hours. When storing leftovers, use small containers for quick cooling. Finally, always remove stuffing from poultry and other stuffed meats, and refrigerate separately.



Nationally-known potter David Eldreth is one of more than 150 artisans who will participate in the 23rd annual Belsnickel Craft Show, held Friday, November 26, noon to 8 p.m., and Saturday, November 27, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Boyertown Elementary School and Junior High School, West. Admission is \$3 for adults.

Combat Insurance Fraud

When it comes to auto insurance, fraud artists are imaginative: They know a variety of ways to cheat insurers and their policyholders.

One way is through staged accidents. A driver deliberately stops in front of a car traveling at low speed, causing a rear-end collision. That driver (and probably several passengers as well) claims to have suffered injuries and seeks payment from the other driver's insurance company.

Another scam involves lawyer-doctor conspiracies. A "runner" prowls the streets listening to a police radio and looking for accidents. He delivers "victims" to a lawyer who takes the case while a doctor builds up medical bills, giving needless treatment or charging for treatment never given. The goal: an insurance settlement much greater than actual damages.

About 15 to 20 percent of auto theft claims involve fraud — often with the cooperation of the owner.

A common scheme: Using vehicle identification numbers and titles from wrecked cars, crooks get insurance on "paper" cars, report them stolen, then file an insurance claim. Or the owner "gives up" the car by abandoning

it and reporting it stolen. The National Insurance Crime Bureau is leading the fight against fraud. Call its hotline at 1-800-TEL-NICB if you suspect fraud.

Shopping By Mail, Telephone, TV

If you buy items through mail order, telephone or television shopping programs, keep the following tips in mind:

- Be suspicious of exaggerated product claims or very low prices and read product descriptions very carefully. Sometimes pictures of products are misleading.
- Before you order, ask about the return policy. Does the company pay charges for shipping and return? Is a warranty or guarantee available? Does the company sometimes substitute comparable goods for the product you want to order?
- Keep a complete record of your order, including the company's name, address and telephone number, price of items or other

charges, date you mailed or phoned in the order and the method of payment. Keep copies of canceled checks and/or statements.

- If you buy a product through a television shopping program, check the cost of the same item sold by other sources such as local stores and catalogs.
- If you buy a product based on a telephone call from the company, ask for the name, address and phone number where you can reach the caller after considering the offer.
- If you have doubts about the company, check with the US Postal Service, the Consumer Protection Agency (518-474-8583) or the Better Business Bureau (1-800-328-2930) before ordering.

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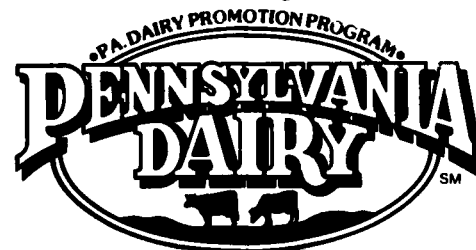


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