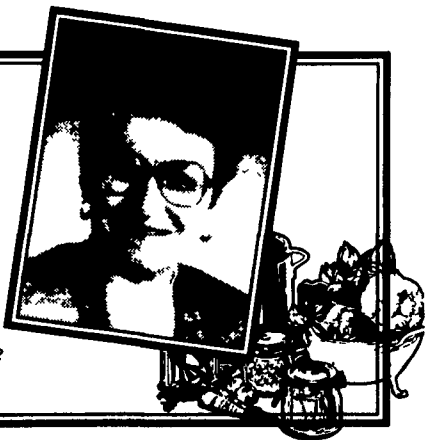


Consuming Thoughts

by

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Food Poisoning Risks
When you look at the faces around your holiday table, think about this: Nearly one in five of the people you see could face special risks from food poisoning.

Who? A lot of people are especially vulnerable to food poisoning. Most of them don't know it. People over 65, pregnant women,

infants and people with chronic illnesses all stand a greater chance of getting sick from food poisoning and suffering complications.

But here's the most important part. You can cut those risks, protecting yourself and your family. Most foodborne illness can be prevented by safe food handling.

One of the riskiest thing peo-

ple do is something they've seen done for decades — leave the cooked turkey out all day. It's on the counter, it's on the table. People pick at it after dinner, and there it sits for hours.

Unfortunately, while it's sitting there, bacteria are multiplying, doubling every 20 minutes in the right conditions.

If just one bacterial cell got on the meat after you pulled it out of the oven at 1 o'clock by 8 that evening you could have over two million.

So here's the food safety rule: Two hours after you pull the cooked bird out of the oven, it should be back in the refrigerator. To speed cooling and limit bacterial growth, cut the meat from the bone, remove the stuffing, and store both in small, shallow containers.

For as long as we've been having holidays, we've had ways to save time with the fixings. Some-

times these old time-savers end up costing us more than time.

All night cooking is the leading example. Some people say, "Mom's turkey used to cook all night. We'd wake up in the morning to the smell of roasting turkey."

Overnight cooking is popular when people are having a lot of guests. A big turkey takes a long time to cook. Rather than get up at the crack of dawn, they cook the turkey all night at a low temperature. But it's *not* a safe practice.

Thorough cooking kills bacteria. But cooking at low temperatures — less than 325 degrees Fahrenheit (F) — has the opposite effect. The warmth of low heat actually helps bacterial grow.

Alternatives to overnight cooking include roasting two smaller turkeys or using a cooking bag or covered roasting pan to speed cooking.

Many consumers get confused about cooking bags. They remember their mother using brown grocery bags. The truth is they're not safe for cooking, and toxins from the glue in the seams could make you very sick.

For safe holiday foods, follow these tips:

- Thawing a frozen turkey. Don't thaw on the kitchen counter. Thaw in the refrigerator or microwave.

- Leftovers. To speed cooling, debone the turkey and refrigerate it in small, shallow containers.

- Cooking. Don't cook turkeys overnight at low temperatures. Cook at 325 degrees Fahrenheit.

- Desserts. Cook custards to 160 degrees Fahrenheit and refrigerate pies made with eggs.

- Eggnog. Don't use a raw egg recipe. Use commercially prepared, pasteurized eggnog or make your own with a cooked custard base.

Cranberries Not A Typical Garden Crop

What can you tell me about cranberries? I don't know anyone who has ever grown them in their garden like raspberries or blueberries.

Although they are related to

blueberries, you won't find many home gardeners growing cranberries — they require exacting conditions not typically found in your backyard. Cranberry production occurs primarily on nat-

ural bogs (marshes or wetlands with very wet, spongy, acidic soils of high organic matter) that have been modified substantially with ditches and dikes for water management, or on artificially

created bogs that have flood control systems.

Highly susceptible to frost, the plants need the insulating effect of water to survive frosts in spring and fall. Cranberry growers often flood their beds to harvest the berries, which float for easy removal. In climates with harsh winters, the low, broadleaf evergreen vine is protected from heavy frost and winter winds by the water or even a layer of ice, both good insulators.

Because of the special growing conditions needed for cranberries — acidic soil high in organic matter, few nutrients, cool summer temperatures and the potential for controlled flooding — they're grown in relatively few places around the nation: mostly in Wisconsin, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Oregon and Washington, but also in Rhode Island, Connecticut, Michigan, Minnesota and Long Island, NY.

Not surprisingly, a good portion of the nation's annual cranberry consumption — about 20 percent — takes place during the week of Thanksgiving.

Cranberries are tart and are

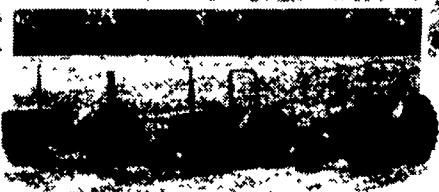
usually heavily sweetened. A cup of cranberry juice cocktail contains 90 milligrams of vitamin C, just what adults need each day. However, a half-cup of cranberry sauce has significantly less vitamin C — only about 3 milligrams. The huge difference is due to the concentration of cranberries: It takes about 4,400 cranberries, or 10 pounds, to make 1 gallon of cranberry juice. Cranberries also contain antioxidants that might help prevent cancer or heart disease.

An October 1998 study published in the New England Journal of Medicine finally gave some credence to the folk remedy of drinking cranberry juice to reduce the risk of urinary tract infections. It appears that tannins in cranberry extracts inhibit the binding of E. coli to cells on the lining of the urinary tract. That allows the bacteria to be flushed from the body. Blueberries also have those tannins.

Chow Line is a service of The Ohio State University. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1044, or filipic.3@osu.edu.



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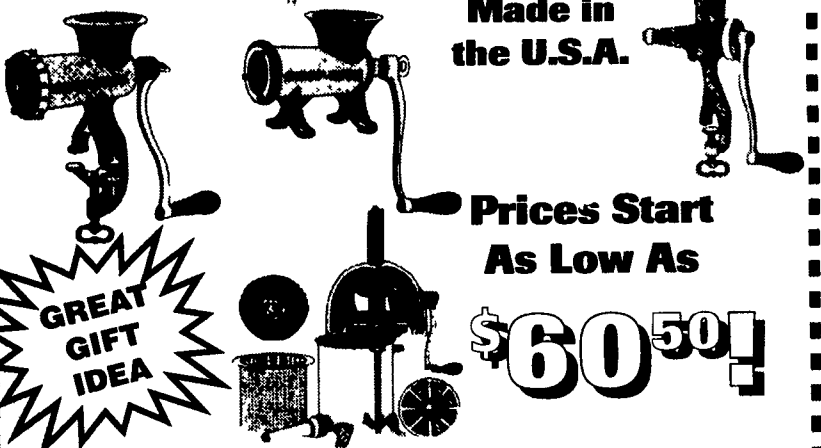
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