



**For Immediate Release: Nov. 12, 2012**

**Food Preparation and Cleaning Tips for a Safe Holiday Season**  
***Maid Brigade Shares Simple Steps to Avoid Foodborne Illness***

ATLANTA—The holiday season should be a time of merriment with friends and family yet oftentimes foodborne illness can be an unwanted guest, causing discomfort and worse for children and the elderly. Each year, 48 million Americans suffer from food poisoning according to the [Harvard Women's Health Watch](#). Holiday buffets and dinners are at a higher risk of contamination than most meals, but some simple precautions can reduce this alarming statistic.

Maid Brigade – the only professional [cleaning company](#) that is Green Clean Certified® – offers the following cleaning and food preparation tips courtesy of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Food & Drug Administration for a safe holiday season.

**Avoid cross-contamination.** Keep meat, fish, and poultry separate from salad greens, fruits, and other produce. Bacteria on fruit and vegetables can be washed off, but meat, fish, and poultry need thorough cooking to eliminate potential bacteria.

**Keep clean.** Disinfect cutting boards using all-natural kitchen cleaners like lemon juice and use only non-porous chopping blocks and cutting boards for food preparation as wood grains can harbor bacteria. Apply disinfectants to countertops and other kitchen surfaces throughout the cooking process and remember to allow the disinfective solution to sit for several minutes before wiping for maximum kill benefit.

**Temperature is everything.** Bacteria can double in 20 minutes at temperatures between 40° F and 140° F. Use a food thermometer to ensure raw dishes are cold enough and that hot dishes have been cooked thoroughly.

**Only two hours.** Raw meat or poultry should be discarded after two hours in the temperature danger zone: 40° F – 140° F. The two-hour rule also applies to all prepared dishes set out on the buffet table. Divide each dish into smaller portions and replace the food as the serving container empties. If you reuse a serving dish, wash it before refilling.

**Food gifts.** Keep any prepared food chilled or frozen en route if traveling more than two hours. If frozen food arrives thawed or a chilled food arrives at room temperature, say thank you and discard the food.

**R&R for tardy guests.** Don't keep food in a warming oven for late arriving guests. Instead, refrigerate and thoroughly reheat.

"It only takes a few extra minutes to correctly maintain food preparation surfaces and to adhere to proper cooking and food storage temperatures," says Marie Stegner, consumer health advocate for Maid Brigade. "These simple safety steps can make the difference between holiday fun and illness."

**About Maid Brigade**

Headquartered in Atlanta, Maid Brigade is the only [maid service](#) that is Green Clean Certified® with more than 400 franchise service areas in the United States and Canada. Established in 1979, Maid Brigade is the green cleaning industry leader and has a longstanding legacy of providing quality customer service and consistent and thorough cleaning using the most advanced techniques and equipment. The company has also implemented a consumer advocacy program in response to reports from the Environmental Protection Agency linking chemicals in traditional cleaning products to a wide range of health risks. For more information visit [www.maidbrigade.com](http://www.maidbrigade.com) or call 866-800-7434.

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