

HOLIDAY FOOD SAFETY - FISH

Food safety is important year round, but during the holidays it becomes increasingly important. This article takes you through a number of potential hazards in preparing and enjoying your holiday meals.

Proper Thawing Procedures

- Refrigerator Thawing – most recommended procedure.
- Microwave Thawing
 - **If you thaw food in the microwave, you must cook it immediately thereafter.
- Cold Water Thawing – place fish in plastic bag for this process to protect from flaking.

Marinating

- Marinate fish in the refrigerator, not on the counter. Discard the marinade after use because it contains raw juices, which may harbor bacteria. If you want to use the marinade as a dip or sauce, reserve a portion before adding raw food.

Cooking Temperatures and Times

Fin Fish	145°F and cook until opaque and flakes easily with a fork.
Shrimp, lobster, crab	145°F and should turn red and flesh should become pearly opaque.
Scallops	145°F and should turn milky white or opaque and firm.
Clams, mussels, oysters	145°F and cook until shells open.

Sanitization and Cross-contamination

- Cross-contamination is a major cause of foodborne illness.
- Cooking utensils, dishes and cutting boards exposed to raw meat and/or poultry products should be thoroughly washed prior to use for any cooked foods to prevent cross-contamination.

Handling Leftovers Properly

- Put leftovers in small containers so that they cool quickly when placed in the refrigerator.
- Large containers of food not only cool slowly, but they also keep the refrigerator at an unsafe temperature above 40°F.

SAFE HANDLING OF FISH IN COLD STORAGE		
Product	Refrigerator (40 °F)	Freezer (0 °F)
Fresh Fish	1-2 Days	2-3 Months
Cooked Fish	3-4 Days	1 Month
Frozen Fish	Use Immediately	3-6 Months
Lightly Smoked Fish (Like Salmon)	1-2 Days	Not Recommended; After 6 Months Loses Quality
Heavily Smoked Fish (Kippered Cod, Smoked Whiting)	6-7 Days	Not Recommended; After 6 Months Loses Quality
Dried or Pickled	1 Week	Not Recommended; After 6 Months Loses Quality
Bisques, Broth, Chowders, and Stews	1-2 Days	3-6 Months