



County of Sacramento

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Kerri Aiello, (916) 874-4667
201-2971 (cell)

NEWS RELEASE

Sending Holiday Food Gifts Safely Through the Mail

Tips to ensure your thoughtful gifts don't include an extra surprise: foodborne illness!

Whether you're sending home-baked goodies to kids away at college or loved ones across the country, or receive food gifts in the mail, follow these tips from the Sacramento County Environmental Management Department to help ensure they are safe to eat when they arrive:

- All perishable foods should be handled and shipped carefully and in a timely manner to prevent foodborne illness. These foods include meat and poultry products, vacuum packaged smoked fish, some sausages and cheeses, and should be shipped cold (41 degrees F. or less) in a foam or heavy cardboard box with a cold source included.
- All perishable foods should be shipped next-day delivery. Let the postal service know that the item is perishable and ask the clerk to stamp "Perishable" or "Keep Refrigerated" on the package.
- Ship foods at the beginning of the week. Packages mailed at the end of the week may not get delivered before the weekend and may sit at the post office or in a warehouse through the weekend. Do not send perishable items to an office unless you know it will arrive on a work day and that there is refrigerator space for keeping it cold.
- Make sure you have addressed the package correctly and notify the recipient that the gift is in the mail.
- Most cookies, candies and baked goods are safe to ship except for items such as cheesecake or other foods that contain custard or cream filling. Here are some tips for sending baked goods:
 - ✓ Pack the food after it cools completely. If foods are packed warm, droplets of water may condense on the inside of the package, where moisture can cause sogginess and mold growth.
 - ✓ Pack the box so the contents do not shift during shipment. Use paper or packing material to help fill in the empty spaces.
 - ✓ Harder cookies such as snack or bar cookies ship better than soft cookies, which can crumble and break during shipping.
- If you receive foods by mail, immediately open the package and check the temperature of perishable items with a food thermometer. If the temperature is warmer than 41 degrees F., notify the sender or company. Do not eat the food - it may be unsafe.

Following these guidelines will help to ensure you, your family and your friends have a safe and healthy holiday season. Always remember: "When in doubt, throw it out."

For more food safety tips, go to www.emd.saccounty.net.

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