

"Don't be a turkey this Christmas, make sure you look after yourself and your guests", says the Food Standards Agency

The Food Standards Agency's (FSA) November Consumer Insights Tracker (CIT), conducted by YouGov, has revealed the top 6 food hygiene "fails" committed by consumers. They are:

- 46% of consumers don't always check use-by dates before cooking or preparing food at home. Are you on the naughty list?
- 45% are playing buffet roulette – saying that they would be likely to leave food from the fridge out after it is served (e.g., for a buffet) and eat it a few hours later
- Around two in five (39%) of the people surveyed admit that they at least occasionally cook raw meat, such as turkey or sausages, past its use-by date. Are you guilty of serving dodgy pigs-in-blankets?
- 33% of respondents say they don't always wash their hands before cooking or preparing food at home, meaning their guests could be eating pathogens on their mince pies - that's Christmas crackers!
- Some aren't chilling at Christmas. Over a quarter (27%) said they would be likely to store food that should be refrigerated in another cool place (such as a garage, porch, or cool box) due to a lack of space in the fridge. Take out those soft drinks!
- 23% of respondents said they would be unlikely to ask if their guests have any food allergies or intolerances. Father Christmas (and the FSA) thinks "safety first" is always best!

Santa's little helpers are often exceptionally busy, and it can be a stressful time especially if you are cooking for others, so make sure you share the joy, not food poisoning, over the festive period.

"Don't be a turkey - our new data shows us that people are taking some unnecessary and avoidable risks in the way they cook, prepare and store food. Whether your Christmas meal is a chicken for two or a goose for twenty-two, make sure it is cooked until steaming hot all the way through.

Although we are talking about this in a light-hearted way, there's a serious message underlying the data. No one likes being ill over the holidays, especially at a time when friends and family come together, including people who are more vulnerable to food poisoning, such as older relatives or those who are pregnant. If you're cooking for a crowd, there's lots to think about and maybe not much room in the fridge. We have lots of easy tips on www.food.gov.uk about cooking turkeys, storing food, chilling and reheating leftovers so you and your loved ones stay well and enjoy the celebrations."

Robin May, Chief Scientific Advisor at the FSA

Along with publishing this new data, the FSA is also reminding people how they can keep the food they cook safe over the holidays:

- If you're buying a fresh turkey, duck, or goose in advance of Christmas day, check the packaging to make sure it's suitable for home freezing
- [Freeze any leftovers](#) for future dishes and make sure you chill food between meals if you want to eat it later. You can visit [Love Food Hate Waste / Preventing food waste](#) for even more information on how to make the most of your food at home
- Keeping your fridge at the correct temperature (5 C or below) helps prevent food poisoning. If food isn't properly [chilled](#) it could go off faster and be unsafe to eat
- A use-by date on food is about safety. This is the most important date to remember. You can eat food until and on the use-by date but not after. You can also freeze food with a use-by date right up to the end of the date on the label
- [Best Before](#) is about quality. The food can be safe to eat after this date – but it might not be at its best
- Our [home fact checker](#) has more tips on how to help make food go further and stay safe.

“If you do get diarrhoea and vomiting this Christmas, there are steps you can take to avoid passing it on to your family. Clean surfaces regularly with bleach and wash your bedding at temperatures of 60C or higher. Avoid preparing food for others if you have symptoms and don't visit vulnerable people for 48 hours after symptoms have stopped. Keep washing your hands - alcohol gels don't work on all bugs.”

Dr Gauri Godbole, Deputy Director at the UK Health Security Agency

About the Consumer Insights Tracker

The [Consumer Insights Tracker](#) is the FSA's monthly survey that monitors changes in consumers' behaviour and attitudes in relation to food. Each month the survey is conducted with approximately 2,000 adults (aged 16 or over) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland who are signed up to an online survey panel. The survey includes a core set of questions that are asked each month, plus ad-hoc questions that vary month to month. The survey is currently run by YouGov.

This [data](#) is from the November wave of the FSA's CIT. These questions were only included in November 2024.

Reports are published on the [Consumer Insights Tracker website](#) each quarter. The full report covering the October, November and December waves of the Tracker will be published at the end of January.