

# Holidays At Home

## Kitchen Gifts That Make Safety Sense

(NAPSA)—Not quite sure what to buy that cook for the holidays? There are a number of kitchen devices on the market that they may find handy and useful.

For example, manufacturers are making food thermometers that are more user-friendly and accessible to consumers. Some types of food thermometers currently available include:

- **Digital.** These read temperatures instantly and are best for small pieces of meat and poultry like hamburgers and chicken breasts.

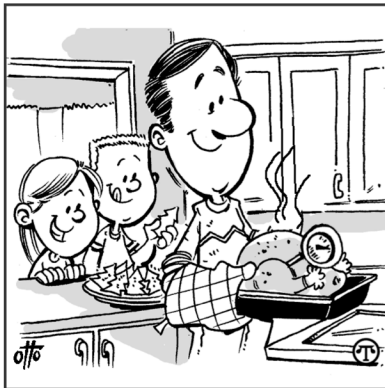
- **Disposable.** Handy when grilling at home or away from home; the tip changes color when the safe temperature is reached for a particular food.

- **Large Dial.** Made for large foods like roasts and turkeys, these are easy to read and can be left in the food for the duration of cooking.

According to USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline, using a food thermometer is the only way to tell if food has reached a high enough internal temperature to destroy harmful bacteria. Cook steaks to at least 145°F, poultry breasts to 170°F, hamburgers to 160°F, and whole chickens or turkeys to 180°F.

Insulated carrying cases for casseroles make great gifts and are convenient for transporting hot or cold food. The insulated casserole carriers will keep things hot or cold for approximately an hour.

When it comes to cutting boards, research shows that non-porous surfaces, such as plastic and tempered glass, are easier to clean than wood. If you are using a solid hardwood cutting board, it



**Food thermometers make it easy for cooks to ensure their food is safe and done.**

is dishwasher safe; however, wood laminates should not be washed in the dishwasher. Disposable cutting boards made of paper and plastic are readily available, but are designed for one-time use only.

Slow cookers are still a very popular—and safe—convenient countertop appliance for busy cooks. They cook foods slowly at a low temperature—generally between 170°F and 280°F. The low, moist heat helps less expensive, leaner cuts of meat become tender.

Another useful appliance is an electric roaster oven. This tabletop appliance serves as an extra oven for cooking foods such as a turkey or large roast. Generally the cooking time and oven temperature setting are the same as for conventional cooking.

To learn more, visit the USDA Web site at [www.fsis.usda.gov](http://www.fsis.usda.gov) or call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854) or TTY at 1-800-256-7072.