

# Wellness

## Wednesday



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## Having A Holiday Party? Here's How Long You Can Leave Food Out On The Table

Planning a holiday party is exciting, but there's one thing you don't want to overlook: food safety. While it's easy to get caught up in the festive atmosphere and delicious spreads, it's crucial to ensure that the food you serve is safe to eat. The last thing you want is for your guests to end up with a foodborne illness. We'll walk you through everything you need to know to throw a realistic party without compromising on food safety. From proper cooking temperatures to keeping hot and cold foods at the right temperatures, we've got you covered.



### The Challenge of Determining If Food Has Gone Bad

One of the biggest challenges when it comes to food safety is identifying whether food has gone bad. As Professor Jagdish Khubchandani, a food safety expert, explains, it's not always easy for the average person to tell if food is no longer safe to eat. While some foods may look, taste, and smell fine, they could still be harboring harmful bacteria that can make you sick. That's why it's essential to follow food safety rules from the start to prevent any potential illnesses.

According to Trevor Craig, a corporate director of technical training and consulting at Microbac Laboratories, the risk of guests getting sick from party food far outweighs the inconvenience of following food safety guidelines. Every year, millions of people in America fall ill, are hospitalized, or even die due to foodborne pathogens. So, let's dive into the steps you can take to keep your holiday party food safe.

### Cooking Foods Thoroughly: The First Line of Defense

When it comes to all meats (including chicken, turkey and seafood) and eggs, it's crucial to cook them thoroughly to eliminate any bacteria that may be present. Darin Detwiler, the chair of the National Environmental Health Association's Food Safety Program, recommends cooking these foods at a high enough internal temperature to kill all bacteria. The United States Department of Agriculture provides a guide to safe internal temperatures, which typically range between 145 to 165 degrees Fahrenheit. To ensure your dishes reach these temperatures, use an inexpensive food thermometer for accuracy and peace of mind.

### Understanding the "Danger Zone"

The "danger zone" is a term you may have heard before, and it refers to the temperature range between 40 and 140 degrees Fahrenheit. Food should never be left in this range for more than two hours. According to Detwiler, bacteria can grow rapidly within the danger zone, making it crucial to keep food outside of this temperature range. Since most refrigerators are set to at or under 40 degrees Fahrenheit, anything warmer than room temperature is likely in the danger zone. By being mindful of the danger zone, you can significantly reduce the risk of harmful bacteria multiplying on your party food.

## Keeping Hot Foods Hot: Preventing Bacterial Growth

Even if you've cooked your dishes to the ideal temperature, you need to keep them hot to prevent any bacterial growth. Detwiler advises that cooked dishes should not be left out for more than two hours, and the clock starts as soon as the food is done cooking. This includes the time spent prepping the food for serving and any travel time. If you need to keep food out for longer, it's important to use a heating source, such as a chafing dish or heat lamp, to maintain a temperature above 140°F. Leaving food out for even an hour can encourage dangerous bacteria to grow, so it's best to keep hot foods consistently hot throughout your party.

## Keeping Cold Foods Cold: Maintaining Freshness and Safety

Just like hot foods, cold foods need to be kept at the right temperature to prevent bacterial growth. Cheeses, potato salad, and other cold dishes should not be left out for more than two hours, unless you have a way to keep them under 40°F. One effective method is to place the dish on a bed of ice. For example, you can fill an aluminum pan with ice and place the dish inside to keep it cold. Smaller items like dips can be easily placed in a bowl of ice for serving. However, larger dishes can be more challenging to keep cold. In those cases, Detwiler recommends keeping small portions on the table or serving counter, while the rest remains in the refrigerator until ready to serve. This is especially important for foods with heavy dairy content, like cheese and dips and eggs (such as deviled eggs) and especially dishes containing raw eggs, such as eggnog.

## Nonperishable Foods: Snacks that Stay Safe

Not all foods require strict temperature control. Nonperishable items like cookies and chips can be safely left out at room temperature for extended periods. Trevor Craig assures that these snacks aren't a big risk if left out. Therefore, they can be great early offerings to leave out for when guests arrive. However, it's still important to ensure that they are stored properly to maintain freshness and taste. Keep them in airtight containers to prevent moisture and other contaminants from affecting their quality. By doing so, you can provide your guests with a variety of delicious snacks without compromising their safety.

## Additional Measures to Mitigate Risks

In addition to temperature control, there are other measures you can take to mitigate the risks of foodborne illnesses at your holiday party. One of the most crucial steps is to wash your hands thoroughly before handling food. This simple act can help reduce the spread of bacteria and ensure the safety of your guests. Another tip is to limit the number of people handling the food. The more individuals involved, the higher the risk of cross-contamination. Provide separate serving tools for each dish to avoid any potential transfer of bacteria. By providing the tools your guests need to treat your food right, you can minimize the risk of foodborne illnesses.

## Leftovers: To Keep or Toss?

Leftover food safety depends on how it was stored at the party. If unsure or improperly stored, it's better to discard. Store leftovers in the fridge or freezer soon after the party ends to reduce the risk of contamination and spoilage. Refrigerated leftovers should be eaten within three to four days, while frozen leftovers can last up to six months.

By following these guidelines and understanding the importance of food safety, you can ensure that your holiday party is a success without compromising the well-being of your guests. From cooking foods thoroughly to keeping hot and cold foods at the right temperatures, every step you take plays a significant role in preventing foodborne illnesses. Remember to prioritize the safety of vulnerable individuals, practice good hygiene, and store leftovers correctly. With these measures in place, you can enjoy a delightful and worry-free holiday celebration.



# SPINACH-ARTICHOKE CROSTINI



## INGREDIENTS

### Ingredients

- Olive oil spray
- 1 medium shallot, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, chopped
- Kosher salt , and fresh pepper to taste
- 1 6-ounce bag fresh baby spinach
- 1 11 ounce baguette
- 1 14-ounce can artichoke hearts , packed in water, drained
- 1/2 cup light cream cheese, softened
- Pinch red pepper flakes, optional
- 1 1 1/2 ounce piece of Parmigiano Reggiano, grated with a box grater or or 1/3 cup pre-shredded

### HOLIDAY APP

Are you looking for a tasty and impressive appetizer to serve at your next holiday gathering? Look no further than Spinach-Artichoke Crostini! Crostini is Italian for toasts. This recipe takes all the flavors of a classic spinach-artichoke dip and transforms it into bite-sized, party-friendly portions. With a rich and creamy spread on top of perfectly toasted baguette slices, these bite size toasts are sure to be a hit with your guests. And the best part? They're easy to assemble and can even be made ahead of time, so you can spend less time in the kitchen and more time enjoying the festivities.

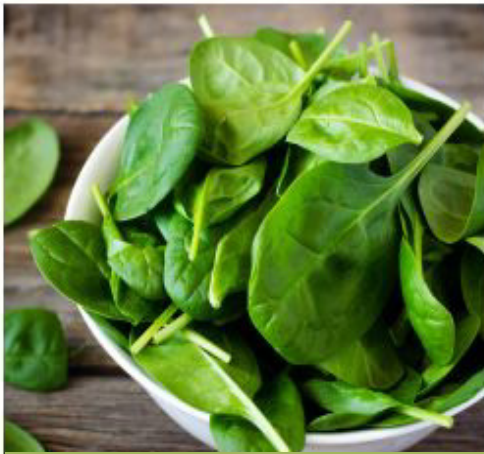
### MAKE AHEAD

We all know how hectic holiday prep can be. That's why it's always a good idea to have a few make-ahead recipes in your arsenal. With these crostini, you can prepare the spinach-artichoke dip and slice the baguette a day in advance. This way, you'll have one less thing to worry about on the day of your event. Simply assemble the crostini and bake them when you're ready to serve. It doesn't get much easier than that!

### Nutrition Information

Serving: 2 crostini, Calories: 97 kcal, Carbohydrates: 15 g, Protein: 4.5 g, Fat: 2.5 g, Saturated Fat: 1.5 g, Cholesterol: 7.5 mg, Sodium: 219 mg, Fiber: 2 g, Sugar: 2 g





## INSTRUCTIONS



## HOW TO MAKE IT

1. Preheat the oven to 450°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Heat a large skillet over medium heat. When the pan is hot, spray it lightly with olive oil spray to coat, then add the shallot and garlic, and season with salt and pepper.
3. Cook, stirring often, until the shallot is starting to soften and become translucent, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the spinach a handful at a time, stirring after each, and cook just until wilted, another 2 to 3 minutes. Set aside to cool for a few minutes.
4. While the spinach cools, cut the baguette into 1/2-inch thick slices on the diagonal. Depending on the size of your baguette, you should get anywhere from 28 to 36 slices.
5. Spread the baguette slices out on the baking sheet (they may be a bit cramped now, but will shrink as they bake) and spray the top side lightly with olive oil. Bake until the edges are golden and the top side is crisp, about 10 minutes. Remove the pan, flip the bread slices, and spray lightly with olive oil. Set the bread aside for now.
6. In a food processor, add the drained artichokes and pulse a few times just to start to break them up. Add the spinach mixture, cream cheese, and the red pepper flakes (if using). Grate 1 ounce of Parmesan (1/4 cup) into the food processor and pulse again until the vegetables are finely chopped and the cream cheese is evenly distributed.
7. Taste and add more salt and pepper if necessary.
8. Spread each slice of baguette with 1 tablespoon of the artichoke mixture. Return the pan to the oven and bake until the topping is bubbling and the edges of the bread are browned, about 10 minutes.
9. Let the crostini cool for a few minutes, then grate the remaining 1/2 ounce of Parmesan (2 tablespoons) over the top. Serve right away.

## FEATURED EXERCISE

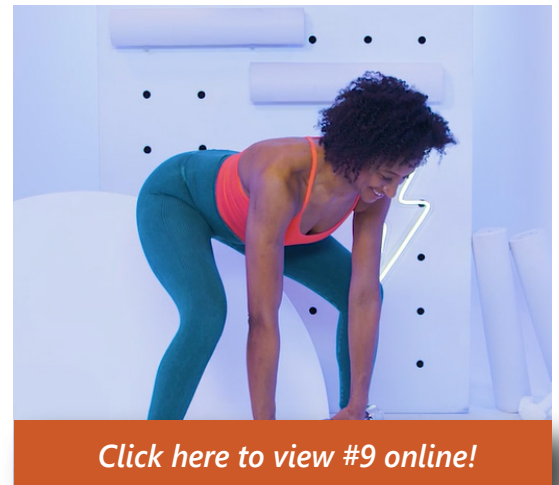
<https://www.womenshealthmag.com/fitness/a19982843/best-leg-exercises/>Featured Exercise ► **Sumo Deadlift**

## HOW TO DO IT:

1. Holding two kettlebells or dumbbells, stand with feet slightly wider than hip-width apart, toes pointed out.
2. Position weights in front of thighs, palms facing in.
3. Keeping knees slightly bent, press hips back as you hinge at the waist and lower the weights toward the floor.
4. Squeeze glutes to return to standing. That's 1 rep.

## BENEFITS:

The Sumo Deadlift is a highly effective exercise that targets multiple muscle groups in the lower body, including the glutes, hamstrings, and quadriceps. By incorporating dumbbells into this exercise, you can further challenge your muscles and enhance your overall strength. In this comprehensive guide, we will take you through the step-by-step process of performing the Sumo Deadlift with Dumbbells, ensuring proper form and technique. Whether you are a beginner or an experienced lifter, this exercise can be tailored to suit your fitness level and goals.



Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.



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