

Food for Thought: Tips on Baking Cookies and Food Safety During the Holidays

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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ALTON - Safe Food Specialist Linda Petterson teamed up with Chef Michael Lapage and RiverBender.com's own CJ Nasello to share tips on staying safe and baking the best cookies.

Petterson provides food safety courses and certifications in food and alcohol management. She regularly works with individuals and commercial chefs throughout the Riverbend region. CJ and Petterson partner for a Food for Thought food safety segment

on [Our Daily Show!](#) once a month, and she noted that her classes have grown as she gets her name out there.

“I have a reputation going in the area that I do give good classes, and I really take pride in that,” Petterson said. “I’ve grown a lot, my classes have been wonderful, this segment has been great. I’m very pleased with what we’ve done. And hopefully we’ve touched a lot of other people’s lives and helped keep their food safe commercially and individually.”

In the most recent Food for Thought segment on [Our Daily Show!](#), Petterson and Lapage showed CJ how to stay safe in the kitchen while baking for the holidays. To begin, the three of them washed their hands, sanitized the table and put on gloves.

Lapage showed them how to roll cookie dough into balls. He explained that this can help the cookies crack as they bake, giving them a half-baked taste that many people enjoy.

“I learned it from a chef I worked for and he learned it from a chef he worked for, so it’s just about passing that tradition and that knowledge down,” Lapage said.

He also had a helpful tip for new bakers: When you’re baking with parchment paper, spray the pan with a nonstick spray first. And when the cookies are done, hold the pan six inches above the table and drop it so the cookies flatten and cool evenly.

“Any time I bake with parchment, I always put a little nonstick spray underneath,” he explained. “It just helps glue the paper down a little bit. A lot of times when you’re cooking with parchment, especially if you have things all the way to the edge, the paper can flip up.”

As they baked, Petterson and Lapage talked about the importance of food safety. Not only are these certifications required in restaurants and commercial kitchens, but even individuals or hobbyist chefs can benefit from learning more about sanitation, allergen management and the safe transportation of food.

Petterson and Lapage encouraged people to display their food safety certificates, especially in restaurants. Petterson noted that it builds customers’ confidence when they know the employees working in the kitchen understand food safety.

“Let them know that we’re trying to keep things safe,” Petterson suggested. “When people get their certification from me, I say put it in the front of the house. Let the customers see that food safety is taken seriously. When they walk in, they can go, ‘Look at all those people certified in here. I feel more secure.’”

For many people, cooking and baking are big parts of the holiday season. Lapage reminded everyone to think about food safety as they complete their holiday cooking. Petterson hopes to see more people in her classes in the new year, whether her students are getting required certifications or simply learning new ways to stay safe in the kitchen.

“It’s not difficult,” Lapage added. “It’s pretty much the bare minimum you can do to keep your customers safe. So just do it.”

For more information about Safe Food Specialist Linda Petterson and her classes, visit the [official website at SafeFoodSpecialist.com](http://SafeFoodSpecialist.com).