

# Be cautious when using your holiday decorative dishes

The holiday season is a time in which traditions are continued and hopefully new traditions are created. One form of holiday tradition has to do with the meals and serving dishes. Everyone has special dishes that are only used during this time of the year, and because of that fact, it is a good idea to double check these serving dishes and other tableware to make sure they are safe.

For years lead has been an ingredient in the glaze, or coating on ceramic bowls, dishes, and pitchers. With proper firing, or heating in a kiln, glazes with lead are safe. However, when dishes are fired incorrectly or when copper is added to the glaze, hazardous amounts of lead can transfer from dishes into the food.

Lead is harmful to health, collecting in bones and some soft tissues. Among other problems, lead poisoning can cause learning disabilities, organ damage, and even

death. Children and pregnant women are particularly sensitive to the toxic effects of lead.

In order to be sure dishes are safe enough for food, review the following guide-

lines: Inspect the surfaces of ceramic dishes. The surface that contacts food should be smooth and shiny, not rough or painted on top of the glaze. Check both sides of dishes, bowls, and pitchers. If dishes have the following written "Not for Food Use" or "For Decorative Purposes Only", do not use it for food. Do not store food in ceramic dishes or leaded crystal. Lead can leach out when acidic foods and beverages such as coffee, tomato juice, fruit, or wine come in contact with glaze or leaded crystal over time.



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Beware of ceramic ware made by untrained potters. For the most part, today's hobbyist are well aware of the problems of lead glazes. Beware of ceramic ware brought back from foreign travel and of older dishes imported before government monitoring. And finally, to check your own dishes, purchase a lead-test kit. Hardware stores and hobby stores are the best place to find the kit.

Again, this is just simply good information to remember and be mindful of not only while enjoying the holiday season but also while preparing for parties to celebrate the new year.

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