

HOLIDAY FOOD SAFETY - TURKEY



Food safety is important year round, but during the holidays it becomes increasingly important. This article takes you through a number of potential hazards in preparing and enjoying your holiday meals.

Proper Thawing Procedures

- ▶ Refrigerator Thawing – most recommended procedure.
 - Thaw turkey in unopened wrapper breast-side up on a tray in the refrigerator.
 - For every 4 pounds of turkey, allow at least one day of thawing.
- ▶ Microwave Thawing
 - Takes 1 to 2 hours on the defrost cycle.
 - Be sure to shield bony areas to prevent cooking.
 - **If you thaw food in the microwave, you must cook it immediately thereafter.
- ▶ Cold Water Thawing
 - Place turkey in unopened wrapper and cover completely with cold water.
 - Change water every 30 minutes.
 - Estimate thawing time to be 30 minutes per pound for a whole turkey.

Cooking Temperatures and Times

- ▶ Roast turkey in an oven at temperatures of 325°F or hotter.
- ▶ Check turkey temperatures with a meat thermometer.
 - Insert thermometer in the large meaty muscle on the inside of the thigh without touching the bone. Dark meat pieces are done when the thermometer reaches 180°F or above.
 - As a rule of thumb, the turkey should hold a temperature of 165°F for 15 seconds.
- ▶ Some recommended cooking times are:

WEIGHT (Pounds)	Hours
8-12	2.75 to 3
12-14	3 to 3.75
14-18	3.75 to 4.25
18-20	4.25 to 4.50
20-24	4.50 to 5

Sanitization and Cross-contamination

- ▶ Cross-contamination is a major cause of foodborne illness.
- ▶ Cooking utensils, dishes and cutting boards exposed to raw meat and/or poultry products should be thoroughly washed prior to use for any cooked foods to prevent cross-contamination.

Handling Leftovers Properly

- ▶ Put leftovers in small containers so that they cool quickly when placed in the refrigerator. The leftovers should be refrigerated within two hours to prevent harmful bacteria from multiplying to unsafe levels on perishable foods left at room temperature.
- ▶ Large containers of food not only cool slowly, but they also keep the refrigerator at an unsafe temperature above 40°F.
- ▶ If you cannot quickly use leftovers, freeze them.
- ▶ Frozen turkey, stuffing and gravy should be used within one month.
- ▶ Leftover turkey kept in the refrigerator should be used within 3 to 4 days; stuffing and gravy within 1 to 2 days. Bring leftover gravy to a rolling boil before serving.