

Let's Talk Turkey

Turkey is one of the traditional protein foods served for the holidays. Keep your holiday free from harmful bacteria and illness by safely storing, thawing and cooking your turkey. Use a meat thermometer and cook the turkey to a safe internal temperature. Wash your hands and utensils before preparing and serving food and frequently during food preparation.

Storing Your Turkey: Take your food home immediately after leaving the grocery store. If Thanksgiving is still several days away, you can store your turkey in the freezer. If it's just a couple of days away, store the turkey in a container on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator until ready to prepare. If handled properly prior to freezing, a frozen turkey is still safe to eat even after the sell-by or use-by date.

Thawing Frozen Turkeys: Two recommend and safe ways to thaw food are:

- ❑ In the refrigerator
- ❑ Wrapped in plastic with cold water running over it

Some purchased frozen turkeys are already stuffed and has the USDA or state mark of inspection on the packaging should not be thawed before cooking. Follow package directions for handling.

Refrigerator Thawing: When thawing a turkey in the refrigerator, plan ahead to allow about one day for every 5 pounds of turkey. The refrigerator should be set at 35-40° F.

Refrigerator Thawing Times (Whole turkey)

8 to 12 pounds	1 to 2 days
12 to 16 pounds	2 to 3 days
16 to 20 pounds	3 to 4 days
20 to 24 pounds	4 to 5 days

Cold Water Thawing: Allow about 30 minutes per pound when thawing a turkey in cold water. Be sure the turkey is in leak-proof packaging so the turkey does not absorb the water resulting in a watery product. Submerge the turkey in cold water. Change the water every 30 minutes until the turkey is thawed. Set a timer to remind you to change the water. Turkeys thawed by the cold-water method should be cooked immediately because conditions were not temperature controlled.

Cold Water Thawing Times (Whole turkey)

8 to 12 pounds	4 to 6 hours
12 to 16 pounds	6 to 8 hours
16 to 20 pounds	8 to 10 hours
20 to 24 pounds	10 to 12 hours

Safe Cooking

The traditional method of roasting a turkey is cooking it 25 minutes per pound in a 325-350°F oven under aluminum foil. Set the oven temperature no lower than 325 °F. Although not considered "roasting," another method is to put the turkey into a poultry-cooking bag that can be purchased at the

For more information or to sign up for a nutrition class call:

Janelle L'Heureux MS RD: 213-201-1556 jlheureux@apla.org or go to www.apla.org & click on Calendar. APLA copyright © 2006 For persons with disabilities, reasonable accommodation may be provided upon request. Please call 213-201-1582 TTY (for voice, call California Relay Service first at 711, then give operator the TTY number) at least 5 working days in advance to ensure availability.

supermarket. When using a cooking bag, cooking time is less, and directions on the package need to be followed.

After cooking: Let the turkey rest in the poultry bag, or under aluminum foil for 15-20 minutes before cutting. Resting will allow the meat to absorb the juices and not run out onto the plate causing the meat to be dry. If stuffed, remove all the stuffing immediately after the resting time. It is also safe to cook an *unstuffed frozen* turkey. The cooking time will take at least 50 percent longer than for a fully thawed turkey.

Using a cooking thermometer: Some meat thermometers can be inserted into the turkey and left in while cooking. An instant read thermometer cannot be left in the oven. Check to see what kind you are using and follow the manufacturer's directions for whatever type you use. When you suspect the turkey is done, take it out of the oven and test several places with the instant read thermometer. If it's not done, put turkey back in and check again later. Be sure to wash thoroughly the thermometer before each use. To get an accurate temperature of the turkey meat, do not let the thermometer touch the bone. Even if the turkey has a "pop-up" thermometer, use another thermometer and test several places, including the innermost part of the thigh and the center of the stuffing. Use the following temperature guidelines:

Internal Temperature for Cooked Turkey (Poultry)

The temperature of a whole turkey must reach 165 °F in the innermost part of the thigh. Check several places to make sure. You may choose to cook your turkey to a higher internal temperature, but pathogens and viruses will be destroyed at an internal temperature of 165 degrees F.

http://www.fsis.usda.gov/news_&_Events/NR_040506_01/index.asp

Sometimes turkey meat may be pink even though the temperature of the meat is 165 degrees or greater at the thigh. The pink color in safely cooked turkey is due to the hemoglobin in tissues, which can form a heat-stable color. This can also happen when smoking, grilling or oven cooking a turkey.

Cooking the Stuffing: The safest method is to cook stuffing in a casserole separately from the turkey. Use a food thermometer to check that the center of the stuffing has reached 165°F.

If you choose to stuff a turkey, pack loosely and do not overstuff. If the stuffing has not reached 165°F, continue cooking the turkey until the stuffing reaches 165°F. A stuffed turkey will take longer to cook than an unstuffed turkey.

Handling Leftovers: Refrigerate leftovers in shallow containers and put in the refrigerator as soon as the meal is over. To avoid bacterial growth and getting sick, do not leave food out or at room temperature more than 2 hours. Thoroughly reheat only the leftovers you plan to eat. Freeze immediately food that will not be eaten in the next 2-3 days. "When in doubt, throw it out."

For additional resources for food or more information about cooking a safe holiday meal:

- ❑ APLA registered dietitians: Janelle L'Heureux MS RD: (213) 201-1556
- ❑ Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA, Washington, DC 20250-3700 Food Safety Publications http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/index.asp or http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Lets_Talk_Turkey/index.asp
- ❑ Meat and Poultry Hotline: 1-800-535-4555 (nationwide), 1-800-256-7072 (TTY) Weekdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Eastern time. Has food safety recordings using a touch-tone phone, available 24-hours a day.
- ❑ Butterball Hotline: 800-288-8372

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