

Most holiday gatherings would not be complete without that special food or recipe that only comes around once a year. Even though you may know the instructions for that special dish by heart, it's always important to pay attention to food safety while preparing the recipe. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) "Fight BAC" campaign suggests following these four basic principles to ensure a safe holiday feast.

Clean – Wash your hands with running water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling foods, especially raw meat and eggs. Make sure to clean food-contact surfaces often as bacteria can contaminate cutting boards, knives, sponges, dishtowels, counter tops and utensils.

Separate – Make sure to keep raw food product away from cooked food product, and to use separate dishes for each. Juices and bacteria can easily spread from one item to another; this is called cross-contamination and is one of the leading causes of food borne illness. Keeping everything separate is the first step in preventing food borne illnesses.

Cook – Cook all food to a safe internal temperature. Foods are cooked enough when the internal temperature of the food gets high enough to kill the bacteria: 160°F for roasts, steaks, pork, and ground meats; 165°F for poultry. Use a thermometer to check the inside temperature of foods.

Chill – Refrigerate foods quickly to prevent the growth and multiplication of harmful bacteria. Leftovers, even including pumpkin pie, should be refrigerated. Refrigerators should be at 40°F and freezers at 0°F.



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The Center for Health and Hygiene in the Home and Community serves as a national and international resource for information and education, applied research, professional training and conferences. The Center focuses on issues relating to hygiene and infection control in areas such as:

- consumer food safety
- home hygiene
- daycare
- preschool
- homecare
- sports and leisure activity
- travel and hospitality

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Food Safety
During the Holidays



November 2007

Turkey Safety

Turkey is a major part of most holiday meals and it is important to make sure that the entire bird is cooked properly. The most important number to remember is 165°F.

Using a food thermometer can provide the essential information about whether your food is safe to serve. Once the thickest part of the turkey, the thigh area, reaches this temperature and holds there for over 15 seconds, the turkey is done. If you've stuffed your bird, make sure that the center of the stuffing reaches 165° F and holds there for 15 seconds.

Timetables for Turkey Roasting

(325 °F oven temperature)

(United States Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service)

Cooking Time — Unstuffed

Size of Turkey	Hours to Prepare
8 to 12 pounds	2 3/4 to 3 hours
12 to 14 pounds	3 to 3 3/4 hours
14 to 18 pounds	3 3/4 to 4 1/4 hours
18 to 20 pounds	4 1/4 to 4 1/2 hours
20 to 24 pounds	4 1/2 to 5 hours

Cooking Time — Stuffed

Size of Turkey	Hours to Prepare
8 to 12 pounds	3 to 3 1/2 hours
12 to 14 pounds	3 1/2 to 4 hours
14 to 18 pounds	4 to 4 1/4 hours
18 to 20 pounds	4 1/4 to 4 3/4 hours

If you've purchased a frozen turkey, do not thaw it out on a counter top as this provides the perfect temperature zone for harmful bacteria to grow and multiply. Instead, thaw it out in the refrigerator in its original wrapping, on a bottom shelf with a tray or plate underneath it to catch any juices. Allow about 24 hours of refrigerated defrosting time per 4-5 pounds. A fully defrosted turkey can stay in the refrigerator for up to 2 days.

When it comes to cooking the bird, every family has their own way of going about it, from stuffing it with a family recipe to coating it with herbs. But be sure to allow ample time for thorough cooking. Here are two tables specifically focused on the weights and cooking times of a regular and a stuffed turkey.

Safe Handling of Leftovers

Holiday leftovers make great lunches and snacks!

However, leftovers can be susceptible to spoilage so follow these tips to keep your leftovers safe.

- Discard any turkey, gravy and stuffing that has allowed to rest at room temperature for longer than 2 hours after cooking.
- Store leftovers in shallow, covered containers to make sure they cool down faster than bacteria can multiply.
- Never reheat them more than once.
- Use refrigerated turkey and stuffing within 3-4 days; frozen leftovers should be used within 2-6 months.

Guidelines to Follow in Case of Suspected Foodborne Illness (Adapted from Clemson Extension's Home and Garden Information Center)

Preserve the Evidence: If a portion of the suspect food is available, wrap it securely, mark "Danger" and refrigerate it. Save all the packaging materials, such as cans or cartons. Write down the food type, the date and time consumed and when the onset of symptoms occurred. Save any identical unopened products.

Seek Treatment as Necessary: If the victim is in an "at risk" group (elderly, infants or immune-compromised), or if symptoms persist or are severe (such as bloody diarrhea, excessive nausea and vomiting or high temperature), seek medical care immediately.

Contact Proper Authorities: Call the local health department if the suspect food was served at a large gathering, from a restaurant or other food service facility or if it is a commercial product. Call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-800-535-4555 if the suspect

food is a USDA-inspected product and you have all the packaging.

Sanitize Household Surfaces

We are all aware that cleaning surfaces is important to keeping our homes looking clean, but just because something looks clean doesn't mean it is hygienically clean. Sanitizing is an essential final step to making sure your home not only is clean, but healthy too. Read the instructions on each label before using cleaning products to make certain you get the results you want and never mix products. Wash sponges daily and dishtowels at least once a week to reduce cross contamination. Utensils, cutting boards and knives should be washed and sanitized between each use.

Here are important steps to proper surface sanitation:

1. Remove food waste with a paper towel.
2. Use a kitchen disinfect cleaner or sanitizing product applied with a clean sponge or rag or paper towel (an easy mixture is ½ teaspoon of bleach per ½ gallon of water)
3. Allow to air dry

Resources

For more information about food safety or for additional turkey cooking tips (in English and Spanish), call:

USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline

[1-888-MPHotline \(1-888-674-6854\)](tel:1-888-MPHotline)

Or go online to: <http://www.fsis.usda.gov>

For more information on cleaning household items you can go to:

The Soap and Detergent Association

www.cleaning101.com

To learn about the safety of cleaning products go to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

www.cpsc.gov