



ROASTING THE TURKEY

Oven temperature should not be lower than 325°F. Stuffing a turkey is not recommended. Cook stuffing separately as a casserole, using a food thermometer to check the internal temperature of the stuffing, which must reach a safe minimum temperature of 165°F. Cook turkey or turkey breast on a rack in a shallow roasting pan. Use a food thermometer to check the temperature. Measure in the innermost part of the thigh and wing and the thickest part of the breast. To allow juices to set, let the turkey stand for 20 minutes.

If you choose to stuff your turkey, the ingredients should be prepared ahead of time. Keep wet and dry ingredients separately and chill all of the wet ingredients. Mix wet and dry ingredients just prior to filling the cavity of the turkey. Don't pack the cavity. Cook the stuffed turkey right away. Make sure the center of the stuffing reaches a minimum internal temperature of 165 °F.

LEFTOVERS, STORAGE AND HOW TO PREPARE THEM SAFELY

Handling cooked food correctly is very important. Bacteria can be put back into foods and promote further growth.

For this reason, leftovers must be cut into smaller portions and put in shallow containers for quick cooling. Cover leftovers with plastic and refrigerated within 2 hours.

REHEATING

- Foods should be reheated thoroughly to an internal temperature of 165 °F.
- Refrigerated-thawed or fresh turkeys can be refrozen once.
- Water-thawed turkeys cannot be refrigerated.

REFERENCES

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Espy, M. Ensuring a safer and sounder food supply. Food Technology 48: 91-93, 1994.

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Fact Sheet 07-33

SAFETY FIRST WHEN PREPARING THE HOLIDAY MEAL TURKEY AND OTHER POULTRY



FOOD SAFETY WEBSITE

http://www.cabnr.unr.edu/nutrition/Outreach/Food_Safety.htm

No one wants to be remembered as the person responsible for the meal that made family and friends ill. Here are some tips for making your holiday meals safe:

IF YOU BUY FRESH TURKEY

Buy turkey one-to-two days before you plan to cook it. Store turkey in the refrigerator on a tray to catch any liquids until you're ready to cook it. **Caution:** avoid fresh pre-stuffed turkeys because if handled improperly bacteria in the stuffing can grow to harmful levels very quickly.

IF YOU BUY FROZEN TURKEYS

Keep frozen until you are ready to thaw it. It is very important to thaw turkey correctly. For best quality, keep your turkey frozen for no longer than 1 year.

TURKEY THAWING TIPS

As long as foods are kept frozen they are safe. However, as soon as you begin to defrost turkey (less than 40°F), any bacteria present in or on the food before freezing will grow. Neither putting food in warm water nor leaving it out on the counter are good ideas for defrosting poultry. This is because the outer layer of the food will be in the "Danger Zone," (between 40 and 140°F, see chart), at temperatures where bacteria grows rapidly. This is happening even when the center of the

package may still be frozen as the meat thaws on the counter.

THREE SAFE WAYS TO DEFROST FOOD ARE: in the refrigerator, in cold water and in the microwave

Refrigerator Thawing.

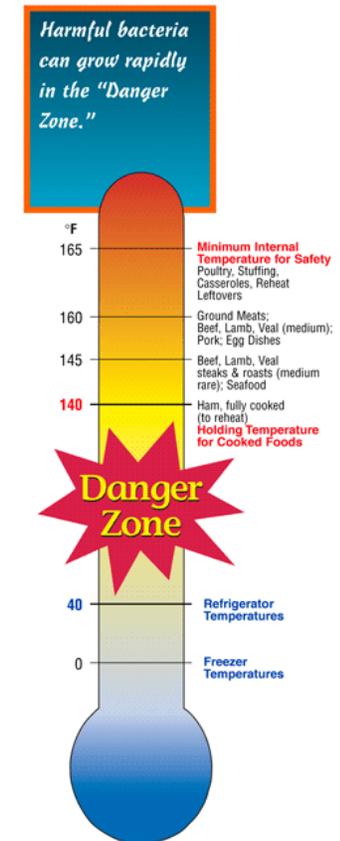
- Turkeys require at least 24 hours for every 5 pounds of weight. A pound of ground meat or boneless chicken breasts will likely need a day to thaw.
- Poultry should be cooked within a day or two of thawing.
- Foods defrosted in the refrigerator can be refrozen once, but there will be a loss of quality.

Cold Water Thawing.

- Place food in a leak-proof bag. A leaky bag will result in meat taking up water (like a sponge) and absorb bacteria from the surrounding water.
- Fully cover the poultry in cold tap water and change the water every half-hour until thawed. For whole turkeys, thawing will take about 30 minutes per pound.
- Food must be cooked immediately once thawed completely.
- Don't refreeze foods thawed by cold water. In both situations, the contact to warm temperature encourages bacteria growth.

Microwave Thawing.

Foods thawed in the microwave should be cooked right away because some areas of the food may become warm and begin to cook during microwave defrosting. The risk is that some of the bacteria in the partially cooked turkey will grow.



www.foodsafety.gov