



Thanksgiving Food Safety Tips From the Food Safety Program

Practice safe food handling procedures to reduce the risk of foodborne illness to your family this Thanksgiving holiday. May the only “fowl” you commit to your meal be your turkey!

Food safety starts from the purchase, through the proper preparation steps, to the cooking and serving of the turkey and other traditional dishes. Here are some helpful tips to keep your Thanksgiving dinner safe so you can enjoy the company of your family and friends.

Food Safety Tips When Shopping

- Buy your turkey preferably 1-2 days before you cook it.
- Pick up the turkey, dairy, and eggs just before checking out.
- Bag the frozen turkey or keep it separate from fresh produce.
- Avoid buying fresh, stuffed turkeys.

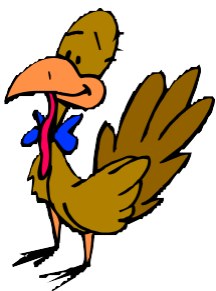


Storing the Turkey/Perishable Foods

- Store the turkey in the freezer if you bought it early in the month.
- Keep turkey in the refrigerator if cooking within 24-48 hours.
- Keep the turkey in its package in a pan to keep any juices from getting into fresh produce or food.
- Refrigerate pumpkin pie and other foods prepared ahead of time.

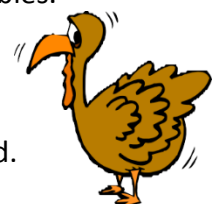
Thawing the Frozen Turkey Safely

- **Wash your hands with soap and water before handling the turkey or any food.**
- There are 3 ways to defrost a frozen turkey safely:
 - Defrost a turkey in the refrigerator (40°F) approximately 24 hours for every 4-5 pounds of turkey.
 - Submerge turkey in its original package in a pan of cold water deep enough to cover the turkey. Change the water every 30 minutes, and allow 30 minutes thawing for every pound. Cook the turkey immediately.
 - Thaw in the microwave oven. Remove any packaging and keep turkey in a microwave-safe pan to catch any juices. Cook the turkey immediately. Microwave ovens may vary so be sure to check the manual for the minutes per pound and power level to use for defrosting.
- Remove any giblets from the turkey cavity and cook separately.



Preparing Food Safely

- **Wash your hands with soap and water.**
- Make sure working areas and surfaces, utensils and plates are also clean.
- Use separate cutting or chopping boards for meats and for fruits/vegetables. Avoid putting cooked food on cutting boards that have touched raw food.
- Avoid wiping your hands that have touched raw food with dish towels.
- Keep raw food away from vegetables and side dishes that will not be cooked.



Cooking Food Safely

- Stuffing the turkey is not recommended. Cook the stuffing separate.
- Use an accurate food thermometer to make sure your turkey is cooked to the correct temperature.
- Check to make sure every part of the turkey reaches a minimum internal temperature of 165°F, even if your turkey has a pop-up temperature indicator. Check the innermost part of the thigh and wing, and the thickest part of the breast.
- Let turkey stand for 20 minutes before carving to allow juices to set.
- Stuffing should also reach a minimum temperature of 165°F.
- Any dish containing eggs should be cooked to reach an internal temperature of 160°F.
- Use a separate clean spoon whenever tasting food from the pot. Do not use the same spoon for stirring to taste the food.



Serving Food Safely

- **Wash hands with soap and water before handling food or eating.**
- Carve the turkey with a clean carving knife and fork.
- Keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot. Return foods to proper storage temperatures within 2 hours to prevent possible rapid bacterial growth.
- Keep pumpkin pie and any cold dessert in the refrigerator at 40°F.
- Use clean serving spoons for each dish.

Storing Left-Overs Safely

- Store left-over food within two hours after serving, including pumpkin pie.
- Use several shallow storage containers to store left-over food.
- Store in the refrigerator if eating left-over food within 3 days.
- Keep in the freezer for longer storage time.
- Label and date all of your leftovers so you know how long they've been in there.

For Further Information Regarding Safe Food Handling for Your Holidays

- USDA - [Let's Talk Turkey - Consumer Guide to Safely Roasting a Turkey](#)
- USDA - [Other Ways to Cook a Turkey](#)
- USDA - [Is Pink Turkey Meat Safe?](#)
- USDA - [Leftovers - Keeping Food Safe](#)
- Orange County Food Safety Program - www.ocfoodinfo.com

Gobble up these food safety tips and your family and friends will be sure to enjoy your meal! If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us. We are here to assist you!

Have a SAFE & Happy Thanksgiving!

The Food Safety Program helps reduce the risk of food poisoning by performing routine inspections of Orange County food facilities and educating food service workers in proper food handling methods and facility sanitation.

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