



# It's Turkey Time!

Food Safety Tips Compiled from the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)

For more information, visit their website at <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Home/index.asp>

Holiday season is approaching, and this is a time when many special dinners will be prepared. When cooking a holiday turkey, it's important to follow proper food handling and cooking steps to make sure your turkey is safe and delicious for guests. By following the basic steps – **clean, separate, cook, and chill** – consumers can reduce their chance of foodborne illness.

# 1

## STEP 1: Get your turkey ready

When purchasing a frozen turkey, allow enough time for thawing. Allow about 24 hours of thawing time for every four to five pounds of frozen turkey. Thawed turkey can stay in the refrigerator for one to two days before cooking. If you buy a fresh turkey, buy it no more than two days before cooking.

Thaw your frozen turkey in the refrigerator or using the cold water method. Submerge the turkey in a container with enough cold water to cover the bird, and change water every 30 minutes. Allow 30 minutes per pound of turkey for thawing time.

You can also cook a frozen turkey. Just allow 50 percent additional cooking time.

# 2

## STEP 2: Choose Stuffing Method

Bread stuffing is a traditional accompaniment to turkey and requires the same food safety precautions as the turkey itself.

The safest method is to bake stuffing outside the turkey in a separate dish. This can also be done ahead of time!

If you plan to stuff the turkey, stuffing should be moist, not dry, because heat destroys bacterial quicker in a moist environment. Never stuff poultry with frozen or pre-cooked stuffing. The stuffing inside the turkey should also be heated to a safe internal temperature of 165° F before serving.

# 3

## Step 3: Cook!

Place your raw bird, stuffed or unstuffed, in a preheated oven at 325° or higher. The turkey must reach an internal temperature of 165° before it is safe to eat. To measure, insert the food thermometer in the innermost part of the thigh, wing, thickest part of breast and stuffing. Bacteria can survive in turkey or stuffing – whether cooked inside or outside the bird – that has not reached 165°, and it may cause foodborne illness. Turkey is safe to eat once all parts reach 165°.

# 4

## Step 4: Chill

Bacteria spread fastest at temperatures between 40° and 140°, so quickly chilling food after a meal reduces the risk of foodborne illness. Refrigerate or freeze turkey and stuffing leftovers within two hours after cooking. Refrigerated leftovers should be used within three to four days or frozen. Always reheat leftovers to a safe minimum internal temperature of 165° before serving.



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