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It's Turkey Time! Do You Know How to Safely Prepare Your Holiday Meal?

Thanksgiving is right around the corner and you know what that means--Turkey! Did you know that 1 in 6 people in the US will get sick this year from consuming unsafe food? The CDC estimates that each year 17,000 residents in Eau Claire County will become sick from consuming unsafe food. "Unsafe food handling and undercooking of your turkey can lead to serious foodborne illness," says Iris Lang, Environmental Health Specialist at the Eau Claire City-County Health Department. Whether you have been cooking for years or this is your first time making a thanksgiving meal, be sure to follow these steps to prepare a delicious and safe turkey this year.



Clean your hands and food contact surfaces often.

- Wash your hands with warm soapy water for 20 seconds before and after handling food.
- Wash food contact surfaces such as countertops, cutting boards, and utensils between preparing each food item.



Separate raw meat from other foods that will not be cooked.

- Store all raw foods on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator so they don't drip and contaminate other food.
- Use separate cutting boards and utensils when handling raw meat.
- Protect your cooked food by putting it on clean plates and surfaces.

Thaw your turkey safely using one of these three methods:

Refrigeration Method:
4 to 12 pounds — 1 to 3 days
12 to 16 pounds — 3 to 4 days
16 to 20 pounds — 4 to 5 days
20 to 24 pounds — 5 to 6 days

Refrigeration Method: Plan ahead and allow approximately 24 hours for each 4 to 5 pounds of turkey when thawing in the fridge. Turkey thawed in the fridge can remain there for 1 to 2 days before cooking.

Cold Water Method:
4 to 12 pounds — 2 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

Cold Water Method: Allow approximately 30 minutes per pound of turkey. Before starting, place the turkey in a leak-proof plastic bag. Submerge the turkey in cold (70 °F) tap water and change the water every 30 minutes until the turkey is thawed. Cook thawed turkey immediately when using this method.

Microwave method: Follow the microwave manufacturer's instructions when defrosting a turkey. A turkey thawed in the microwave must be cooked immediately.



Stuff your turkey safely.

- The safest way to prepare stuffing is by cooking the stuffing separately from the turkey. If you cook stuffing inside the turkey, place stuffing in the turkey just before cooking.
- Use a food thermometer to measure the temperature. Be sure the center of the stuffing reaches 165°F to ensure foodborne illness causing bacteria don't survive!



Cook your turkey to **165°F**.

- Set the oven to at least 325 °F. The following tables are good guides for turkey cook times.
- Use a food thermometer to check the innermost part of the thigh and wing, the thickest part of the breast, and the center of the stuffing. If all temperatures are 165 °F or above your turkey is done!

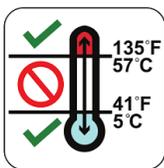
<u>Stuffed Turkey:</u>
8 to 12 lbs. — 3 to 3.5 hours
12 to 14 lbs. — 3.5 to 4 hours
14 to 18 lbs. — 4 to 4.25 hours
18 to 20 lbs. — 4.25 to 4.75 hours
20 to 24 lbs. — 4.75 to 5.25 hours

<u>Unstuffed Turkey:</u>
4 to 6 lb. breast — 1.5 to 2.25 hours
6 to 8 lb. breast — 2.25 to 3.25 hours
8 to 12 lbs. — 2.75 to 3 hours
12 to 14 lbs. — 3 to 3.75 hours
14 to 18 lbs. — 3.75 to 4.25 hours
18 to 20 lbs. — 4.25 to 4.5 hours
20 to 24 lbs. — 4.5 to 5 hours



Chill leftover food within 2 hours.

- Refrigerate or freeze leftovers in shallow containers to cool evenly.
- Maintain refrigerator temperature at 40°F and freezers at 0 °F.
- Leftover turkey, stuffing, and other thanksgiving foods stored in the refrigerator should be eaten within 3 to 4 days. Leftovers that are frozen are safe indefinitely.



Reheat leftovers to 165 °F.

- Use your food thermometer again to be sure leftovers reach 165 °F.
- To keep your food safe, keep it out of the temperature danger zone: 41 °F to 135 °F to stop the growth of bacteria.
- **Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold!**

For more helpful information about how to keep your thanksgiving dinner safe check out these resources:

- <http://www.cdc.gov/features/turkeytime/>
- <http://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/types/turkey/>
- <http://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/events/thanksgiving/>

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