



Food Safety Tips for Your Holiday Meal

When you think "Thanksgiving", what comes to mind? Turkey! According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), more than 46 million turkeys are cooked and eaten in the United States at Thanksgiving. That number represents one-sixth of all the turkeys sold in the U.S. each year. Barbara Ingham, Extension Food Safety Specialist with the University of Wisconsin, Division of Extension, shares a few tips to ensure that your holiday meal is safe and delicious:

THAWING - When thawing the turkey in the refrigerator, the USDA recommends allowing 24 hours for every four to five pounds of meat. For example, a 12 to 15-pound turkey would need at least three days to thaw. Some newer, more efficient refrigerators can add a day or two to that time. Turkeys can also be thawed in the microwave, or in a sink filled with cold water - just change the water every 30 minutes. It's also possible to cook a turkey directly from the frozen state.

COOKING - Cook your Thanksgiving turkey to an internal temperature of 165°F, as measured with a food thermometer. Check the temperature several places: the thickest part of the breast, the inner thigh, and the wing. Remember to check the temperature of stuffing, too. All turkey meat, including any that remains pink, is safe as soon as all parts reach 165°F.

LEFTOVERS or "PLAN OVERS" - Proper cooling and handling of leftovers is a key food safety step. Refrigerate leftovers within two hours. Cut turkey into smaller pieces and place in shallow containers for quick cooling in the refrigerator. Place leftover sauces, dressing, and any side dishes in the refrigerator within two hours as well. Use leftovers within four days or freeze for longer storage. Ingham likes to joke that she often refers to leftovers as "planned overs," with family and guests sometimes preferring meal items reheated or eaten cold the next day.

DESSERT! - Dessert is a part of many holiday meals and pumpkin pie, custard pie, and cheesecake must also be handled safely. Bake these festive desserts to a safe minimum internal temperature of 160°F. Once cool, refrigerate until the big meal. Pumpkin or cream pie that you purchase are also safest stored in the refrigerator once you bring them home.

For last minute questions, refer to these holiday hotlines:

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| USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline 1-888-674-6854 9 am – 5 pm weekdays (Central) 7 am – 1 pm Thanksgiving Day | Email: mpholine.fsis@usda.gov | Chat Ask USDA! (English/Spanish) Ask.USDA.gov Pregunteleakaren.gov Live chat during hotline hours |
| Butterball Turkey Talk-Line Online, via phone, even help from Alexa-enabled devices | 800-288-8372 Text 844-877-3456 | https://www.butterball.com/online-turkey-talk-line |
| Jennie-O Turkey Hotline Live chat, via phone, text or social media | 800-887-5397 Text the word Turkey to 73876 | https://www.jennieo.com/hotline/ |