



Food Safe Holiday Meals

Storing the Turkey

It is a matter of personal preference whether you decide to buy a fresh or frozen turkey. Buy a fresh turkey no more than 2 days ahead of the big event and make sure that you have the proper storage space in the refrigerator.

If you buy a frozen turkey, you can safely defrost it in the refrigerator, allowing *24 hours for every 5 pounds that the turkey weighs.*

Check to make sure that the original bag is not broken so that no raw juices come into contact with other food.

You can also thaw the turkey in cold water. Change the water every 30 minutes until the turkey is thawed and cook immediately.

Never defrost on the kitchen counter.

Safe Cooking

For safety and to make sure the turkey is cooked thoroughly, the internal temperature of the turkey must reach 180° F in the thigh. Set the oven temperature to 325° F and use a meat thermometer to make sure that the right internal temperature is reached and to prevent overcooking.

Use a meat thermometer even in turkeys that have a “pop-up” temperature indicator.

To Stuff or Not to Stuff

The safest way to cook the stuffing is separate from the turkey. But whether the stuffing is cooked inside or outside of the bird, it must reach an internal temperature of 165° F. If the turkey is stuffed, mix the ingredients just prior to filling the cavity. Stuff loosely, to help ensure safe, even cooking.

Handling Left-Overs

Cut leftovers into small pieces or slice them. Refrigerate the stuffing and turkey separately in shallow containers within 2 hours of cooking. Use leftover turkey and stuffing within 3 to 4 days

and gravy within 1 to 2 days. Gravy should be reheated to a boil and leftovers, if they are heated, should be reheated to 165° F.

Preparing and Serving the Meal

Remember the “2 hour rule” when entertaining with a large meal or buffet. Don’t let food linger for more than 2 hours in the danger zone.

Prepare foods quickly, cook them thoroughly and serve them promptly. Keep hot foods hot with warming trays and cold foods cold by placing serving dishes on crushed ice.

Traveling with Food

Wrap hot food in foil or carry insulated containers with hot packs to maintain a temperature of at least 140° F. (2004 CFP change to 135 F).

Store cold foods in a cooler with ice or a freezer pack so that the food remains at 40 F or lower.

Eggnog and Other Recipes with Eggs

Commercial, ready-made eggnog is prepared using pasteurized eggs and does not require heating. Homemade eggnog may contain harmful bacteria if not prepared properly. Serve cooked eggnog by heating the egg-milk mixture to at least 150° F. Refrigerate at once, dividing large amounts into shallow containers so that it cools quickly.

Pasteurized egg products are safer to use and do not require heating.

Cider

Popular holiday beverages, such as unpasteurized apple cider, mulled cider and other drinks made from unpasteurized apple cider may contain harmful bacteria.

Use ciders labeled as pasteurized, or bring unpasteurized cider to a boil before serving. This is especially important when serving cider to children, the elderly and people with weakened immune systems.

Comment:

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