

Thanksgiving Turkey Safety Tips



Michigan State University Extension – Oakland County

Everyone is looking to feed their family a delicious Thanksgiving meal. Storage, preparation and cooking it properly are of the utmost concern to keep everyone safe during the holidays. Here are some quick tips to enjoy a wonderful, safe Thanksgiving dinner.



Fresh turkeys can be stored up to 2 days in the fridge. If you purchase it any sooner, you will need to freeze or cook it. To thaw

a frozen turkey, leave it in the original packaging. Place a pan under the turkey and thaw in the refrigerator on the lowest shelf to avoid cross contamination of other foods. Allow one day of thawing for every 5 pounds of turkey. Once the turkey is thawed, remember to cook it within 2 days.



A turkey can be thawed in cold water for a quicker thaw. Keep the turkey in the original packing and then wrap in a freezer bag. Fill your clean sink with fresh cold water. Submerge the turkey completely. Change the water every 20 minutes to keep it cold and safe. This

method thaws about 1 pound every 30 minutes. After the turkey is thawed out this way, it must be cooked immediately for safety.



A frozen bird can be safely cooked without thawing. If frozen, a turkey will take about 50% longer than the same size turkey that is fresh or thawed.

When opening the packaging from a fresh or thawed out turkey, be aware that there will be juices that will contaminate all surfaces with which they come in contact. Be sure to wash and sanitize all places it may have touched, including refrigerator shelves, walls, sinks, counters and utensils like kitchen scissors that were used to cut open the packaging. Do not rinse the turkey as this has the tendency to contaminate more surfaces and by cooking the bird properly, harmful bacteria will be killed without contaminating areas of the kitchen unnecessarily.



When cooking a turkey, remove the giblets before cooking. The giblets should be cooked separately from the turkey. Place the turkey in a shallow roasting pan and roast until the internal temperature of the



turkey is at least 165 degrees F. when checked with a food thermometer. Check the temperature in the thickest part of the

turkey which would be in the thigh. Be sure the thermometer is not touching the bone.



For questions on food safety call the Oakland County MSU Extension Food Safety and Nutrition hotline

248/858-0904

Turkey and all other perishable foods will need to be eaten within two hours. Leftovers should



immediately be wrapped up and refrigerated or thrown out. Leftovers should be eaten within three days. You can freeze leftovers. Wrap them well in freezer wrap or containers. Mark them with what they are and the date they were prepared. Freeze them as soon as possible and eat them up within six months.



Refrigerated leftovers should be heated up to 165 degrees. Bring gravies and sauces to a

hard boil before enjoying these leftovers.

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