

# THANKSGIVING FOOD SAFETY TIPS



Don't be a turkey! Practice safe food preparation procedures to reduce the risk of foodborne illness to your family this Thanksgiving holiday.

Meat and poultry, the centerpiece of most holiday meals, can be a source of foodborne disease unless handled and prepared properly. Unfortunately, the hidden dangers of bacterial contamination in perishable foods are often forgotten. Salmonella bacteria are commonly found on poultry and are among the most common sources of diarrheal disease in the U.S. Federal statistics show that millions of people become ill from foodborne diseases, and as many as 5,000 die each year as a result of micro-organisms in food.

Here are some guidelines to keep in mind:

## Food Handling and Preparation

- Purchase only government-inspected meat and poultry products. Check the "sell by" date on all food you buy, and never buy packages if that date has passed.
- Wash your hands thoroughly before and after preparing any food product.
- Never thaw meat or poultry at room temperature. When thawing a frozen turkey, either keep it refrigerated on a tray, under cold running water, or in the microwave. When thawing in a microwave, finish cooking in a conventional oven immediately.
- Keep two cutting boards handy -- one for preparing raw meat, poultry, and fish, and the other for cutting cooked food and preparing salads. After using utensils or cutting boards for raw food preparation or handling, thoroughly wash these items before using them for the preparation or handling of any other food.
- When preparing eggnog, hollandaise sauce, Caesar-salad dressing, or other recipes that call for raw or undercooked eggs, use a pasteurized egg product instead of regular eggs.

## Turkey Tips

- Never cook a stuffed turkey or chicken in a microwave oven. Microwave cooking does not distribute heat evenly and can leave pockets of cold inside the poultry.
- Use a cooking thermometer to determine if the turkey is fully cooked. The meat should reach 180° Fahrenheit (F), and if the bird is stuffed, the stuffing must reach at least 165° F.
- If a fully cooked turkey is purchased, pick it up hot and bring it home to eat it immediately.

## After the Feast

- Don't allow cooked food to sit out at room temperature for more than two hours. Leftovers should be refrigerated promptly after the meal. Freeze leftovers that won't be eaten within a few days. It's also a good idea to divide large amounts of leftovers into smaller portions for quick chilling. Leftover meat stored in the refrigerator should be eaten within three to four days.
- Reheat leftovers to 165° F throughout or until steaming hot. Soups, sauces, and gravies should be brought to a rolling boil for at least one minute.
- Never taste leftover food that looks or smells strange. When in doubt, throw it out!