

# QUICK FACTS: HAVING A FOOD SAFE *Home for the Holidays*

## Plan ahead and be prepared:

5 ways to help keep foodborne illness off the menu.

### #1: Organize + Shop with Food Safety in Mind

Organize your kitchen by equipping it with key items needed for safe food handling: at least two cutting boards (one for raw meats, and one for other ready-to-eat foods), a food thermometer, and shallow storage containers. Be sure the refrigerator is set at 40°F or below, and the freezer is set at 0°F or below.

When shopping, keep raw poultry/meat/seafood in separate plastic bags away from other foods in your cart. The same goes for checkout, and transport home. Avoid bruised or damaged produce. Avoid canned goods that are dented, leaking, or rusted – these can be a breeding ground for harmful bacteria. Look for poultry and meats raised without the routine use of antibiotics.

Once perishable food is home, immediately refrigerate, freeze, or prepare it. Thaw a frozen turkey in the refrigerator (allowing 1 day per each 5 lbs.) or in cold water changed every 30 minutes (allowing 1/2 hour per lb.) **Do NOT thaw on the counter or in the sink!**

### #2: Practice Proper Hand Washing

Dirty hands are the fastest way to spread germs and cause sickness.

Be sure to wash it all: Palms and fingers → Between fingers and thumbs → Wrists → Back of hands → Under/around fingernails **with soap and water!**

### #3: Cook Safely + Eat Safely

Contaminated food cannot be detected by smell, color, or taste. **A food thermometer is a critical tool** that'll help make certain potentially dangerous bacteria in your food have been destroyed. Wash the thermometer between readings.

**Ensure that poultry/meat/seafood are cooked to safe minimum internal temperatures:**

- The thickest part of the turkey (all poultry) must reach an internal temperature of at least 165 F.
- For ground meats (except poultry) a safe internal temperature is 160 F.
- Safe internal temperature for whole cuts of meat (including pork) is 145 F – Rest meat 3 minutes before carving or serving.
- The safe internal temperature for seafood is 145 F.

**Stuffing a turkey is not recommended.** Cook the stuffing outside the bird (in a casserole dish) for optimum safety and thorough cooking.

**Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold.** It seems simple enough, but in the rush of preparation and getting everyone to the table it's easily forgotten. Once the food comes out of the oven, you've got about 2 hours to serve, enjoy, and then refrigerate or freeze the leftovers.

**Safely enjoy dishes containing raw eggs.** Homemade eggnog, meringues, and other dishes are safer by using pasteurized eggs.

*\*Note: Cooking any food partially (for finishing later) increases the risk of bacterial growth.*



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## #4: Avoid Cross-Contamination

### **Always:**

- Wash hands and surfaces (cutting boards, dishes, utensils, counter tops) often with soap & water.
- Use one cutting board for fresh produce, and a separate one for raw meat/poultry/seafood.
- Use a clean plate. Never put cooked food on the same plate/cutting board that held raw food.

### **When marinating food:**

- When prepping marinade, set some aside to use later as a condiment on cooked foods.
- Always marinate in the fridge, not on the counter.
- Sauce used to marinate raw poultry/meat/seafood should not be used on cooked foods.

### **When preparing fruits and vegetables:**

- Always wash produce before eating, even if you plan to peel or slice it. To remove visible dirt/grime: rinse fresh fruits and veggies in running tap water -- even fruits like cantaloupe and avocado. Firm produce can be scrubbed with a clean, dedicated veggie brush.
- Throw away the outermost leaves of a head of cabbage, lettuce, or other leafy green.
- Avoid leaving cut produce at room temperature for longer than two hours.

### **When refrigerating food:**

- Put raw and prepared foods in separate containers. Storing raw poultry/meat/seafood in containers or tightly-sealed plastic bags prevents meat juices from dripping on other foods.
- To ensure a cool, consistent temperature, store eggs in their original carton in the main body of refrigerator. (Not the door.)
- Allow for air circulation in the fridge: don't pack it tight.

## #5: Remember Everybody Loves Leftovers

### **Refrigerate Within 2 Hours:**

Be mindful of how long food has been sitting out. Cold temperatures slow the growth of bacteria, so cooling food as quickly as possible to the safe storage temperatures to 40 F or lower (fridge), and 0 F (freezer) is important. Bacteria are always on the move and can grow in perishable foods like meat, eggs, salads, and casseroles within 2 hours. Perishable foods that have been at room temperature for 2 hours or more must be tossed. (1 hour when the temperature is above 90 F.)

### **Use Shallow Containers:**

Storing leftovers in shallow containers will cool them faster in the fridge. Slice turkey (and other meats) aiming for packing leftovers less than 2 inches deep. Covering leftovers in airtight containers helps keep bacteria out, as well as other refrigerator odors. Label and date all leftovers. It is safe to place hot food in shallow containers directly in the refrigerator.

### **Eat Within 3-4 Days:**

Your leftovers last safely in the refrigerator for 3-4 days. Beyond that, you'll need to freeze or discard them. Leftovers that are frozen will last for 3-4 months. For long-term storage, use freezer paper, heavy-duty aluminum foil, or containers specifically made for freezing.

### **Reheat to 165 F (73 C):**

For solid leftovers like meat or stuffing, reheat it to an internal temperature of 165 F. Bring soups, sauces, and gravies to a rolling boil. If leftovers need to be thawed, you can safely do that in the fridge, in cold water, or in the microwave. After thawing use the food within 3-4 days.

From all of us at STOP Foodborne Illness, Have a happy and safe holiday!

