

THANKSGIVING FOOD SAFETY TIPS



This Thanksgiving a lot of us will be enjoying the traditional turkey and stuffing, but if you are stuffing your turkey and not following safety precautions you could be placing your family at risk for food poisoning. Here are some safety tips to keep your Thanksgiving meal safe.

Plan your meal a few weeks in advance. Decide if you want a fresh or frozen turkey. There really is not much difference between the two.

Make sure if you buy a frozen turkey there is enough room in your freezer to store it until time to cook. Also allow enough time for the turkey to thaw. When thawing a turkey do so in the refrigerator, or a bucket or tub filled with ice water. The water will need to be changed several times to ensure it stays cold. Allow one day of thaw time for every five pounds of turkey if thawed in the refrigerator. If you choose to thaw your bird in a tub of water allow 30 minutes for every pound of turkey. Frozen turkeys need to be cooked within four days of thawing. Fresh turkeys require cooking within two days.

Make sure you wash your hands with hot soapy water and any knives cutting boards and utensils that have come in contact with the raw turkey. After the turkey is thawed and you are preparing to cook it be sure to wash the turkey inside and out. If you are stuffing your turkey you will need to follow some safety tips as well. Never buy a turkey that has already been stuffed. Do not stuff the turkey until you are ready to cook it. If you choose to stuff the turkey you need to be sure to check the temperature inside the bird where the stuffing is to make sure it reaches 165 degrees. A safer alternative would be to put the stuffing in a casserole dish then use the drippings from the turkey to moisten the stuffing.

Never slow cook a turkey on a low temperature .The oven needs to be on at least 350 degrees to be sure any bacteria present is killed. The turkey needs to cook until it reaches 165 degrees internally. Even though turkeys come with a pop up button that's suppose to tell when it's done you still need to check the temperature using a meat thermometer for your safety.

You will need to wash all raw vegetables such as the celery you will be using in the stuffing, or any vegetables you will be using in salads or other parts of the Thanksgiving meal. Serve the food as soon as its ready .If you are doing a buffet style meal make sure the cold food stay cold by placing them in a tray with ice. Food should only be out at room temperature for up to two hours. When saving the Thanksgiving leftovers separate them into shallow containers. This will allow them to cool quicker. Slice the turkey into small portions and place in the refrigerator for up to three or four days. Gravy should only be kept for one to two days. You might consider freezing some of the leftovers for later use.