



Food is an important part of many holiday celebrations. You can help reduce the risk of foodborne illness for your family and friends during the holiday season by following some basic food safety tips. **There are four basic steps you should always follow to help reduce the risk of foodborne illness:**

Clean

- Wash hands, contact surfaces (e.g. kitchen counters, refrigerator handles) and utensils often to avoid the spread of bacteria.
- Wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food, after using the bathroom, changing diapers or touching pets.
- Always wash fresh fruits and vegetables with clean, running water that is safe to drink.

Separate

- Keep raw foods separate from cooked and ready-to-eat foods to avoid cross-contamination.
- Ideally, use two cutting boards, one for raw meat, poultry and seafood, and one for washed fresh produce and ready-to-eat foods.
- Never place cooked food back on the same plate or cutting board that previously held raw food, unless it has been washed with soap and warm water.

Cook

- Make sure you kill harmful bacteria by cooking foods to the proper internal temperature.
- Use a probe thermometer and cook to these temperatures:
 - 82°C (180°F) for whole poultry
 - 71°C (160°C) for beef roasts or steaks
 - 74°C (165°F) for stuffing, casseroles, leftovers, egg dishes, ground turkey and ground chicken, including sausages containing poultry meat.
- When you think the food is almost ready, remove it from the heat source and insert the thermometer in the thickest part of the food, away from bone, fat or gristle. Resume cooking if the proper temperature has not been reached.
- Be sure to wash the thermometer in between temperature checks.
- Eat hot foods while they are still hot.

Chill

- Keep cold foods cold. Bacteria can grow rapidly when food is allowed to sit in the Danger Zone between 4°C (40°F) and 60°C (140°F).
- Eat cold foods while they are still cold.
- Remove bones from large pieces of meat or poultry and divide them into smaller portions before storing.
- Refrigerate or freeze leftovers within two hours in covered shallow containers.
- Discard perishable food that has been allowed to sit at room temperature for more than two hours. You cannot tell whether food is contaminated with surface bacteria by the way it looks, smells or tastes. When in doubt, throw it out!

Travelling with food

- As always, keep hot foods hot (at or above 60°C / 140°F) and cold foods cold (at or below 4°C / 40°F).
- Transport hot food in insulated containers with hot packs. Transport cold food in a cooler with ice or freezer packs.

Holiday Buffets

If you are serving food buffet-style, use warming trays, chafing dishes or crock pots to keep hot foods hot. Keep cold foods cold by putting serving trays on crushed ice. Do not let food remain at room temperature for more than two hours. Also, do not add new food to serving dishes that are already in use. Instead, use a clean platter or serving dish each time you re-stock the buffet.

Thawing Turkey

Thawing turkey properly is very important to ensure food safety. Proper thawing prevents bacteria from increasing to such a level that cooking may not effectively destroy them. These are three recommended methods to defrost turkeys:

- **In the refrigerator**
This is a safe, slow method and you must plan ahead. It takes approximately 24 hours for every five pounds of turkey to thaw. The turkey should be placed in a large platter to prevent juices from dripping on to other foods, and placed on the lowest shelf in the refrigerator.
- **Submerged in cold water**
The turkey should be wrapped in a leak-proof plastic bag. Change the water every 20 minutes to ensure it stays cold. It takes approximately 30 minutes per pound to thaw.
- **In a microwave**
The turkey should be cooked immediately after thawing. Check the manufacturer's instructions for the minutes per pound and power level to use for thawing.

Stuffing

- Stuffing is moist and is slow to heat up and cool down. For those reasons, stuffing provides an ideal place for bacteria to grow.
- The safest way to deal with stuffing is to cook it separately, either in its own oven dish, or on the stove top.
- If you are going to stuff a bird, stuff it loosely just before roasting, and take all of the stuffing out immediately after cooking so it will cool down faster.
- All stuffing, whether cooked separately or inside a bird, should be heated to a minimum internal temperature of 74°C (165°F).

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