



Holiday Food Safety

Thanksgiving kicks off holiday party season where we gather with friends and family for delicious meals. Following a few key rules can help to keep you and your guests feeling good.



Thaw

Turkey is the main attraction at many Thanksgiving meals. Whether you buy your turkey fresh or frozen, keeping it at the right temperature in the days leading up to cooking is important for preventing foodborne illness. If you plan to thaw in the refrigerator remember that it can take up to six days for a large turkey to thaw. Thawing in cold water is a faster option, but you need to change the water every 30 minutes to make sure it stays cold enough. Turkey and other meats should never be thawed or left on the counter at room temperature.



Cook

Roasting to the right temperature can mean the difference between a delicious turkey and one that is either undercooked or dried out. While many turkeys come with a pop up thermometer, it is a good idea to invest in a separate meat thermometer. You want the internal temperature of your turkey and stuffing to get to 165°F. How long that takes will depend on the size of the turkey.



Store

While it can be tempting to leave party food out to snack on, storing it quickly means that you can enjoy it safely for a few more days. Anything left out at room temperature for longer than two hours should be tossed. Break down large items into smaller containers before putting them in the refrigerator or freezer so that they cool faster. Refrigerated leftovers should be used within 3-4 days. If you need more time, freeze instead. When it is time to reheat, bring the food back to 165°F. For more information on food safety, check out homefoodsafety.org.

REFERENCES:

1. Home Food Safety, Available at homefoodsafety.org.
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