

K-State Research and Extension News for November 16, 2022

Quick Tips for Thanksgiving Food Safety

Submitted by Franny Eastwood, Extension Agent

Thanksgiving is a time for families to gather and enjoy each other - not suffer from food poisoning! Here are a few quick tips to keep your family healthy:

- The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recommends thawing the turkey in the refrigerator. It takes about 24 hours for every 4-5 pounds of turkey, not including the day you cook it. A 20-24 pound turkey would take 5-6 days to thaw.
- For optimum safety, do not stuff your turkey. Place stuffing in a separate baking dish or pan to cook.
- USDA recommends an oven temperature no lower than 325°F for cooking a turkey along with using a food thermometer to make sure the thickest part of the turkey reads 165°F. A 20-24 pound turkey may take about 5 hours to cook.
- Avoid cross-contamination by using separate cutting boards, plates, and utensils when handling raw turkey. Wash items that have touched raw meat with warm soap and water, or place them in a dishwasher.
- Refrigerate leftovers within two hours to prevent bacteria from growing on the food. Eat leftovers in the refrigerator within 3-4 days. Use the freezer to store leftovers for longer periods.
- Do not overfill your refrigerator, as it causes it to work too hard and may not keep it at 40°F or below.

Healthy Holiday Safety Tips

- Clean out your refrigerator the week before the event to make room for thawing items and storing leftovers.
- Use a refrigerator thermometer to check that your refrigerator is 40°F or below.
- Frequently wash your hands with water and soap for 20 seconds.
- Simplify the day by preparing foods the day before if possible.
- Do not prepare food when you are ill.
- Use a calibrated food thermometer.
- Store leftovers in shallow containers to decrease cooling time. This prevents food from spending too much time at unsafe temperatures.
- Keep leftovers in a cooler with ice or frozen gel packs if the food is traveling home with a guest who lives more than two hours away.

If you are traveling this holiday season:

Transport Food Safely

- Keep hot foods hot (140°F or higher) by wrapping them in foil, and then in heavy towels. Or, carry them in insulated wrappers or containers designed to keep food hot.
- Keep cold foods cold (40°F or lower) by placing them in a cooler with ice or freezer packs or an insulated container with a cold pack designed to keep food cold.

Upon Arrival

- Place cold foods in the refrigerator.
- Place hot foods in an oven hot enough to keep the food at an internal temperature of 140°F or above; use a food thermometer to ensure the food stays at a safe internal temperature.
- Plan to serve food shortly after guests have arrived.

Avoid the Danger Zone

- By keeping hot food hot and cold food cold, you are avoiding the Danger Zone (temperatures between 40 - 140°F) where bacteria grows rapidly.
- **Perishable foods such as meat, poultry, eggs, and casseroles kept at room temperature for longer than 2 hours should be thrown out.**
- Ready-to-eat foods such as cookies, crackers, bread, and whole fruit are exceptions to the Danger Zone

Source: University of Nebraska Lincoln Food Calendar. For more information on nutrition, food safety, health, or family and child development contact the Marais des Cygnes Extension District, or write to fmeastwo@ksu.edu or check out our website: www.maraisdescygnnes.k-state.edu