

Let's Talk Turkey Safety

Safely Thaw Your Turkey Thaw turkeys in the refrigerator, in a sink of cold water that is changed every 30 minutes, or in the microwave. Never thaw your turkey by leaving it out on the counter. When the turkey is left out at room temperature for more than two hours, its temperature becomes unsafe as it moves into the danger zone between 40°F and 140°F, where bacteria can grow rapidly.

Safely Handle Your Turkey Raw poultry can contaminate anything it touches with harmful bacteria. Follow the four steps to food safety – cook, clean, chill, and separate – to prevent the spread of bacteria to your food and family.

Safely Stuff Your Turkey Cooking stuffing in a casserole dish makes it easy to make sure it is thoroughly cooked. If you put stuffing in the turkey, do so just before cooking. Use a food thermometer to make sure the stuffing's center reaches 165°F. Bacteria can survive in stuffing that has not reached 165°F and may then cause food poisoning. Wait for 20 minutes after removing the bird from the oven before removing the stuffing from the turkey's cavity; this allows it to cook a little more.

Safely Cook Your Turkey Set the oven temperature to at least 325°F. Place the completely thawed turkey with the breast side up in a roasting pan that is 2 to 2-1/2 inches deep. Cooking times will vary depending on the weight of the turkey. To make sure the turkey has reached a safe internal temperature of 165°F, check by inserting a food thermometer into the center of the stuffing and the thickest portions of the breast, thigh, and wing joint. Let the turkey stand 20 minutes before removing all stuffing from the cavity and carving the meat.

- * Refrigerate leftovers at 40° or cooler within two hours of preparation to prevent food poisoning.

