



Have a Food Safe Thanksgiving



Thanksgiving will be here soon. The gatherings will likely be smaller this year, but for those preparing the meal, it may be the largest one they have cooked for months. Avoid mistakes that could cause foodborne illness.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) states, "Unsafe handling and undercooking of food can lead to serious foodborne illness." To avoid making anyone sick, the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service offers tips for a food safe Thanksgiving:

Tip 1: Don't Wash Your Turkey. Washing raw meat and poultry can cause bacteria to spread up to three feet. Cooking poultry to a safe temperature kills any dangerous bacteria that may be present. Washing poultry is not necessary.

Tip 2: Thaw Safely. Use the refrigerator, the cold-water method, or the microwave to safely defrost a frozen turkey. **Thawing in the refrigerator is preferred because the turkey will defrost at a consistent, safe temperature.** Allow 24 hours for every 5 lbs. of turkey to thaw in the refrigerator (a 15 lb. turkey needs 3 days). To thaw in cold water, submerge the bird in its original wrapper, changing the water every 30 minutes. Cold water and microwave thawing can be used if your bird did not entirely defrost in the refrigerator. Follow your manufacturer's guide for thawing poultry in the microwave. Poultry defrosted in cold water or the microwave must be cooked immediately.

Tip 3: Use a thermometer. To determine if a turkey is cooked to a safe temperature, check its internal temperature with an instant read food thermometer. Check a whole bird in three locations: the thickest parts of the thigh, the wing, and the breast. Your thermometer should register 165°F in all three places. Using a food thermometer is the best way to ensure your turkey is cooked to a safe temperature, but not overdone.

Tip 4: Refrigerate leftovers quickly. To store, cut the turkey into small pieces after serving and refrigerate. Refrigerate all leftovers within 2 hours at room temperature. They will keep for four

days in the refrigerator set below 41°F. For longer storage, pack them into freezer safe bags or containers and freeze for up to 4 months.

For something new this season, consider using a wine infused finishing salt to sprinkle a flavorful touch on meats, vegetables, or chocolate desserts. Find details on our [SLO/SB Counties Food Preservation Blog](#).

We are still here!!!

No in-person workshops for now, but you can visit our website at: <http://cesanluisobispo.ucanr.edu/>, our blog at <https://ucanr.edu/blogs/foodpreservation>, email us at slomfp@ucanr.edu, or call our helpline at: 805-781-1429. We also check pressure canner gauges at no cost. Contact us for more information!

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